BAMBI

MARJORIE BENTON COOKE

25

Jan 1919

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SHE SAW JARVIS BEFORE THE CURTAIN, MAKING A FIRST-NIGHT SPEECH

BAMBI

BY

MARJORIE BENTON COOKE

AUTHOR OF

"DR. DAVID," "THE GIRL WHO LIVED IN THE WOODS," ETC.

Illustrated by
Mary Greene Blumenschein

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1914

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TO BAMBI

With thanks to her for being Herself!

M. B. C.

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BAMBI

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I

"PROFESSOR JAMES PARKHURST, I consider you a colossal failure as an educator," said Francesca, his daughter, known to friend and family as Bambina, or Bambi for short.

Professor Parkhurst lifted a startled face from his newspaper and surveyed his only child across the breakfast table.

"My dear, what causes this sweeping assertion of my incompetence?"

"I do! I do! Just what did you expect me to do when I grew up?"

"Why, to be happy."

"That's the profession you intended me for? Who's to pay the piper? It's expensive to be happy and also unlucrative."

"I have always expected to support you until your husband claimed that privilege."

"Suppose I want a husband who can't support me?"

"Dear me, that would be unfortunate. It is the first duty of a husband to support his wife."

"Old-fashioned husbands, yes — but not modern ones. Lots of men marry to be supported nowadays. How on earth could I support the man I love?"

"You are not without talents, my dear."

"Talents? You almost said accomplishments! If you were not living in the Pliocene age, Professor James Parkhurst, you would know that accomplishments are a curse — accomplishment is the only thing that counts. I can sing a little, play the piano a little, auction bridge a good deal; I can cook, and sew fancy things. The only thing I can do well is to dance, and no real man wants to be supported by his wife's toes."

The Professor smiled mirthlessly. "Is this a general discussion, or are you leading to a specific point, Bambi?" he inquired.

"It's a specific charge of incompetence against you and me. Why didn't you teach me something? You know more about mathematics than the man who invented them, and I am not even sure that two and two make four."

"You're young yet, my dear; you can learn. What is it you want to study?"

"Success, and how to get it."

"Success, in the general sense of the word, has never seemed very important to me. To do your work well —— "

"Yes, I know. It is the fact that you have not thought success important that hampers me so in the choice of a husband."

"Bambina, that is the second time a husband has been mentioned in this discussion. Have you some individual under consideration?"

"I have. I have practically decided on him."

"You don't tell me! Do I know the young man?"

"Oh, yes — Jarvis Jocelyn."

"He has proposed to you?"

"Oh, no. He doesn't know anything about it. I have just decided on him."

"But, my dear, he is penniless."

"That's why I reproach you that you haven't brought me up to support Jarvis in a luxury he will have to get used to."

"But why have you settled on this youth? I seem to recall a great many young men who are always about. I presume they admire you. Certainly this dreamer is the most ineligible of them all."

"Oh, that — yes. That's why I must take him. He'll starve to death unless some one takes him on, and looks after him."

"Isn't there some asylum, perhaps?"

Bambi's laugh rang out like a chime.

"A home for geniuses. There's an idea! No, Professor Parkhurst, Society does not yet provide for that particular brand of incompetents."

"It seems as if you were going rather far in your quixotism to marry him."

Again the girl laughed.

"I total him up like this: fine family, good blood, decent habits, handsome, healthy, poetic. He might even be affectionate. His one fault is that he is not adjusted to modern commercial standards. He cannot make money, or he will not — it comes to the same thing."

"I am unable to see why you are elected to take care of him. He must fit his time, or perish. You don't happen to be in love with him, do you?"

"No, I — I think not. He interests me more than anybody. I suppose I am fond of him rather."

"Have you any reason for thinking him in love with you?"

"Mercy, no! He hardly knows I'm alive. He uses

me for a conversational blotting-pad. That's my only use in his eyes."

"He's so very impractical."

"I am used to impractical men. I have taken care of you since I was five years old."

"Yes, my dear. But I am not trying to feed the world bread when it demands cheese."

"No, you are distinctly practical. You are only trying to prove a fourth dimension, when three have sufficed the world up to date."

"Yes, but —— "

"No buts. If it had not been for me you would have gone naked and been arrested, or have forgotten to eat and starved to death."

"Now, my dear Bambi, I protest —— "

"It will do you no good. Don't I remember how you started off to meet your nine o'clock class clad in your pyjamas?"

"Oh, my child!"

"Don't talk to me about impracticality. It's my birthright."

"Well, I can prove to you —— "

"I never believe anything you have to prove. If I can't see it, first thing, without any process, it isn't true."

"But if you represent yourself as Y, and Jarvis as X, an unknown quantity —— "

"Professor Parkhurst, stop there! There's nothing so unreliable as figures, and everybody but a mathematician knows that. Figures lie right to your face."

"Bambina, if you could coin your conversation —— " Professor Parkhurst began.

"I am sorry to find you unreasonable about Jarvis, Professor."

He gazed at her, in his absent-minded, startled way. He had never understood her since she was first put into his hands, aged six months, a fluffy bundle of motherless babyhood. She never ceased to startle him. She was an enigma beyond any puzzle in mathematics he had ever brought his mind to bear upon.

"How old are you, Bambina?"

"Shame on you, and you a mathematician. If James is forty-five, and Bambina is two thirds of half his age, how old is Bambi? I'm nineteen."

His startled gaze deepened.

"Oh, you cannot be!" he objected.

"There you are. I told you figures lie. It says so in the family Bible, but maybe I'm only two."

"Nineteen years old! Dearie me!"

"You see I'm quite old enough to know my own mind. Have you a nine o'clock class this morning?"

"I have."

"Well, hasten, Professor, or you'll get a tardy mark. It's ten minutes of nine now."

He jumped up from his chair and started for the door.

"Don't you want this notebook?" she called, taking up the pad beside his plate.

"Yes, oh, yes, those are my notes. Where have I laid my glasses? Quick, my dear! I must not be late."

"On your head," said she.

She followed him to the hall, reminded him of his hat, his umbrella, restored the notebook, and finally saw him off, his thin back, with its scholarly stoop, disappearing down the street.

Bambina went back to the breakfast table, and took up the paper. She read all the want "ads" headed "female."

"Nothing promising here," she said. "I wonder if I could bring myself to teach little kids one, two, and one, two, three, in a select dancing class? I'd loathe it."

A ponderous black woman appeared in the door and filled it.

"Is you froo?"

"Yes, go ahead, Ardelia."

"Hab the Perfessor gone already?"

"Yes, he's gone."

"Well, he suttinly did tell me to remin' him of suthin' this mohnin', and I cain't des perzactly bemember what it was."

"Was it important?"

"Yassum. Seemed lak I bemember he tell me it was impo'tant."

"Serves him right for not telling me."

"It suttinly am queer the way he can't bemember. Seem lak his haid so full of figgers, or what you call them, ain' no room for nuthin' else."

"You and father get zero in memory — that's sure."

"I ain't got no trubble dat way, Miss Bambi. I bemember everything, 'cepting wot you tell me to bemember."

The dining-room door flew open at this point, and a handsome youth, with his hair upstanding, and his clothes in a wrinkle, appeared on the threshold. Bambi rose and started for him.

"Jarvis!" she exclaimed. "What has happened? Where have you been?"

"Sleeping in the garden."

"Dat's it — dat's it! Dat was wat I was to remin' the Perfessor of, dat a man was sleepin' in the garden."

"Sleeping in our garden? But why?"

"Because of the filthy commercialism of this age! Here I am, at the climax of my big play, a revolutionary play, I tell you, teeming with new and vital ideas, for a people on the down-slide, and a landlady, a puny, insignificant ant of a female, interrupts me to demand money, and when I assure her, most politely, that I have none, she puts me out, actually puts me out!"

Bambi choked back a laugh.

"Why didn't you come here?"

"I did. Your father refused to see me; he was working at his crazy figures. I burst in, and demanded you, but he couldn't remember where you had gone."

"What a pity! Well —— "

"I told him I would wait in the garden. If necessary, I would sleep there."

"Yas'm, yas'm, dat's when he called me in, to tell me to bemin' him."

"That will do, Ardelia."

"Yassum," said the handmaiden, and withdrew.

"Now, go on."

"I was full of my big act, so I walked and walked for hours. Then I lay down in the summer-house, and I must have gone to sleep."

"Go up and take a bath, and come down to some breakfast. I will send Ardelia to get some of father's things for you if you need them."

"All right, but don't delay with breakfast. If I don't get this act down, I may lose it. That fiend, in female guise, held my paper."

"Go on! Get ready!"

He plunged out, and Bambi went to send Ardelia to him, while she cooked his eggs and fried his bacon. As she worked, she smiled, out of sheer amusement.

In due course of time, he appeared, freshened up, and with renewed eagerness to be at work. He scarcely noticed Bambina as she served his breakfast. He ate as if he were starved.

"I suppose the landlady held your clothes?"

"I don't know. I didn't ask. It was unimportant."

"How much do you owe her?"

He looked at her in surprise.

"I have no idea."

"Have you any money at all?"

"Certainly not. I'd have given it to her if I had, so she wouldn't interrupt me."

"What are you going to do?"

"Oh, I don't know. I can't think about it now. I am full of this big idea. It's a dramatization of the Brotherhood of Man, of a sublime, socialistic world —— "

"Has it occurred to you, ever, Jarvis, that the world isn't ready for the Brotherhood of Man yet? It's just out of the tent stage, where War is the whole duty of Man."

"But it must be ready," he urged, seriously, "for I am here with my message."

She smiled at him as one would at a conceited child.

"Poor old Jarvis, strayed out of Elysian fields! Were you thinking of sleeping in the summer-house permanently?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter; only the play matters. Give me some paper, Bambi, and let me get to work."

She rose and went to stand before him.

"Would you mind looking at me?"

He turned his eyes on her.

"Not just your eyes, Jarvis. Look at me with your mind."

"What's the matter with you?" he asked, slightly irritated.

"Do you like my looks?"

"I've never noticed them."

"That's what I'm asking you to do. Look me over."

He stared at her.

"Yes, you're pretty — you're very pretty. Some people might call you beautiful."

"Don't overdo it, Jarvis! Have you ever noticed my disposition?"

"No — yes. Well, I know you're patient, and you must be good-natured."

"I am. I am also healthy and cheerful."

"I don't doubt it. Where is the paper?"

She put her hands on his shoulders and shook him gently.

"Jarvis, I want you to give me your full attention for five minutes."

"What ails you to-day, Bambi?"

"The only thing I lack is a useful education, so that I am not sure I can make a very big living just at first, unless I dance on the stage."

"What are you driving at?"

"Would you have any special objection to marrying me, Jarvis?"

"Marrying you? Are you crazy?"

"Obviously. Have you?"

"Certainly I won't marry you. I am too busy. You disappoint me, Bambi; you do, indeed. I always thought you were such a sensible girl —— "

"Father can help out a little, at first, but I may as well tell you, he doesn't approve of you as a son-in-law."

"I don't approve of him, impractical dreamer! Where is that paper?"

"You've got to be taken care of until you get an awful tumble. Then you will wake up and do big things, but in the meantime you must eat."

"You talk nonsense, and you're interrupting me. If I don't get at that scene —— "

"Will you marry me? I can't take care of you if you don't, because the neighbours will talk."

"I won't marry you. I don't love you."

"No more do I love you. That's got nothing to do with it. Here's one of father's empty notebooks. Say yes, and you can have it."

His eyes fairly glistened as they fell on the book.

"For heaven's sake, don't torture me. Give me the book and have it your own way, whatever it is you want."

She laughed, gave him the book, and he was at the table instantly, sweeping back the dishes with a ruthless hand.

"No, no, into the study you go, while I make a descent on your landlady, rescue your clothes, and get the license and the minister, my liege lord."

She settled him at his desk, where he was immediately lost to his surroundings.

Bambi slipped out noiselessly, dressed for the street, humming a little song, and presently departed.

Meanwhile, his first recitations being over, the Professor returned for two hours' research in his study, to find Jarvis ensconced there, oblivious to the outside world. "Go away, go away!" he shouted to Professor Parkhurst.

"I'll trouble you to get out of my study," said the Professor.

"You'll get your filthy money in due time, my good woman, so go away!" cried Jarvis.

"Whom are you addressing? Good woman, indeed!"

At this moment Bambi returned, and sensed the situation.

"Oh, I didn't expect you back, Father Professor. This is Jarvis. You see he's come. He has no objection at all to my marrying him, so I got a minister."

"A minister? You got him?"

"Yes, you see Jarvis is busy. There is no need of our waiting, so we are going to be married in half an hour or so."

"To-day? Here?"

"Yes, right here, as soon as Jarvis finishes this scene."

"Is he going to occupy my library permanently?" wailed the Professor.

"No, no. I'll fix him a place on the top floor."

"He's not at all my choice," said Professor Parkhurst firmly, gazing at the unconscious Jocelyn. "You can see by the way he tosses paper about that he is neither methodical nor orderly."

"Those are husband traits that I can do without, thank you."

Ardelia appeared.

" 'Scuse me, but yo' all expectin' the preacher up here? He say Miss Bambi tol' him to cum here at eleben o'clock "

"Yes, show him right in here."

"Yassum."

Ardelia reappeared with the Reverend Dr. Short at her heels. Bambi greeted him, and Professor Parkhurst shook hands absently. Bambi went to lean over Jarvis. He suddenly threw down his pen, stretched himself, and groaned.

"Now, if I can just get the last act outlined —— "

"Jarvis, just a minute, please."

He suddenly looked at her, and at the other two.

"This is Reverend Dr. Short, Mr. Jarvis Jocelyn."

"I have nothing to say to orthodoxy," Jarvis began, but Bambi interrupted him.

"Doctor Short has come to marry us. Stand up here for a few moments, and then you can go on with your third act."

She laid her hand on his arm, and drew him to his feet.

"The shortest possible service, please, Doctor Short. Jarvis is so busy to-day."

Doctor Short looked from the strange pair to Professor Parkhurst, who looked back at him.

"You are sure this is all right?" he questioned.

"Do tell him to be quick, Bambi. If it's about that landlady I cannot —— "

" 'Sh! Go ahead, Doctor Short."

Doctor Short read the service, and between the three of them they induced Jarvis to make the proper responses. He seemed utterly unaware of what was going on about him, and at the end of a brief service, when Bambi's hand was taken from his arm, he sat down to work at once. Bambi led the other two men from the room.

"He acted as if he were drunk, or drugged, but he isn't. He's just full of an idea," she smilingly explained.

"Have you known this young man long?" Doctor Short asked the Professor.

"Have we, my dear?"

"We have known him fifteen years," she answered.

"Well, of course that makes a difference," murmured the reverend gentleman. "I wish you every happiness, Mrs. Jocelyn," he added, and took his departure.

"How soon can you get him out of my study?" asked the Professor, looking at his watch. "I have only one hour left before lunch."

"Felicitate me, Professor, felicitate me on my marriage."

"I hope you will be happy, my dear, but I doubt

it. His lack of consideration in taking my study —— "

Bambina looked at him, and began to laugh. Peal followed peal of laughter until tears stood in her eyes.

"I'll go rescue the study, Herr Professor. Oh, this is too rich! Bernard Shaw ought to know about me," she laughed, as she tripped upstairs.

So it was that Bambina acquired a husband.

II

TWO days later Jarvis, shaved, properly dressed, and apparently sane, appeared on the piazza, where Bambi and the Professor were at lunch. He hesitated on the threshold until they both turned toward him.

"Good morning," he ventured.

"Good morning, Jarvis," said Bambi gayly.

"Morning," tersely, from the head of the house.

"Might I ask how long I have been sojourning on the top floor of this house, and how I got there?"

"Do you mean to say you don't know?"

"Haven't an idea. I have a faint recollection of a big disturbance, and then peace, heavenly peace, with black coffee every once in a while, and big ideas flowing like Niagara."

Bambina's eyes shone at him, but her father looked troubled.

"You know what the big disturbance was, don't you?" he asked.

"It seems to me I wanted paper — that somebody was taking my things away —— "

"You'd better tell him, Francesca; he doesn't remember, so I don't think it can be legal."

Jarvis looked from one to the other.

"What's all this? I don't seem to get you."

Bambi's laugh bubbled over.

"You get me, all right."

"For goodness' sake, talk sense."

"You came here, three days ago, in a trance, and announced that you had been bounced from the boarding-house, and that you needed paper to blot up the big ideas — the Niagara ideas —— "

"Did I?"

"So I took you in, redeemed your clothes for you ——"

"It was you who planted me upstairs in that heavenly quiet place, and brought black coffee?"

She nodded.

"God bless you for it."

"I did something else, too."

"Did you? What?"

"I married you."

He looked at her, dazed, and then at the Professor.

"What's the joke?" he asked.

"There is no joke," said the Professor sternly. "She did it. I tried to stop her, but she never listens to me."

"Do you mean, Bambi——" he began.

"I mean you told me to go ahead, so I got a license and a minister, and married you."

"But where was I when you did it?"

"You were there, I thought, but it didn't seem to take. Can't you remember anything at all about it, Jarvis?"

"Not a thing. Word of honour! How long have we been married?"

"Three days. You couldn't come out of the play, so I dragged you upstairs, fed you at stated periods, and let you alone."

He looked at her as if for the first time.

"Why, Bambi," he said, "you are a wonderful person."

"I have known it all along," she replied, sweetly.

"But why, in God's name, did you do it?"

"That's what I say," interpolated the Professor.

"Oh, it just came to me when I saw you needed looking after —— "

"Don't you believe it. She intended to do it all along," said her father, grimly. "I tried to dissuade

her. I told her you were a dreamer, penniless, and always would be, but she wouldn't listen to my practical talk."

"I seem to get a pretty definite idea of your opinion of me, sir. Why didn't you wake me up, so I could prevent this catastrophe?"

"I supposed you were awake. I didn't know you worked in a cataleptic fit."

"Catastrophe!" echoed Bambina.

"Certainly. Why don't you look at it in a practical way, as your father says? I never had any money. I probably never will. I hate the stuff. It's the curse of the age."

"I know all that."

"You will be wanting food and clothes no doubt, and you will expect me to provide them."

"Oh, never! You don't think I would take such an advantage of you, Jarvis, as to marry you when you were in a work fit and then expect you to support me?"

The Professor shook his head in despair, and arose.

"It's beyond me, all this modern madness. I wash my hands of the whole affair."

"That's right, Professor Parkhurst. I married him, you know; you didn't."

"Well, keep him out of my study," he warned.

Then he gathered up his scattered belongings, and turned his absent gaze on Bambi.

"What is it I want? Oh, yes. Call Ardelia."

Bambi rang, and Ardelia answered the summons.

"Ardelia, did I ask you to remind me of anything this morning?"

She scratched her head in deep thought.

"No, sah, not's as I recolleck. It was yistiddy you tol' me to remin' you, and I done forgot what it was."

"Ardelia, you are not entirely reliable," he remarked, as he passed her.

"No, sah. I ain't jes' what you call —— " she muttered, following him out.

Bambi brought up the rear, chuckling over this daily controversy, which never failed to amuse her.

When the front door slammed, she came back to where Jarvis sat, his untouched luncheon before him. He watched her closely as she flashed into the room, like some swift, vivid bird perching opposite him.

"I spoiled your luncheon," she laughed.

"Bambi, why did you do this thing?"

"Good heavens, I don't know. I did it because I'm I, I suppose."

"You wanted to marry me?" he persisted.

"I thought I ought to. Somebody had to look after you, and I am used to looking after father. I like helpless men."

"So you were sorry for me? It was pity —— "

"Rubbish. I believe in you. If you have a chance to work out your salvation you will be a big man. If you are hectored to death, you will kill yourself, or compromise, and that will be the end of you."

"You see that — you understand —— "

He pushed back his chair and came to her.

"You think that little you can stand between me and these things that I must compromise with?"

She nodded at him, brightly. He leaned over, took her two small hands, and leaned his face against them.

"Thank you," he said, simply; "but I won't have it."

"Why not?"

"Because I am not worth it. You saw me in a work fit. I'm a devil. I'm like one possessed. I swear and rave if I am interrupted. I can't eat nor sleep till I get the madness out of me. I am not human. I am not normal. I am not fit to live with."

"Very well, we will build a cage at the top of the

house, and when you feel a fit coming on you can go up there. I'll slip you food through a wire door so you can't bite me, and I'll exhibit you for a fee as the wildest genius in captivity."

"Bambi, be serious. This is no joke. This is awful!"

"You consider it awful to be married to me?"

"I am not thinking of myself. I am thinking of you. You have got yourself into a pretty mess, and I've got to get you out of it."

"How?"

"I'll divorce you."

"You've got no grounds. I've been a kind, dutiful wife to you. I haven't been near you since I married you, except to give you food."

"How do you expect we are to live? Nobody wants my plays."

"How do you know? You never try to sell them. You told me so yourself. You feel so superior to managers and audiences that you never offer them."

"I know. I occasionally go to the theatre, by mistake, and I see what they want."

"That's no criterion. We won't condemn even a Broadway manager until he proves himself such a dummy as not to want your plays."

"Broadway? Think of a play of mine on Broadway! Think of the fat swine who waddle into those theatres!"

"My dear, there are men of brains writing for the theatre to-day who do not scorn those swine."

"Men of brains? Who, who, I ask you?"

"Bernard Shaw."

"Showman, trickster."

"Barrie."

"Well, maybe."

"Pinero?"

"Pinero knows his trade," he admitted.

"Galsworthy, Brieux."

"Galsworthy is a pamphleteer. Brieux is no artist. He is a surgeon. They have nothing to say to Broadway. Broadway swallows the pills they offer because of their names, but they might just as well give them the sugar drip they want, for all the good it does."

"Well, they get heard, anyhow. What's the use of writing a play if it isn't acted? Of course we'll sell your plays."

"But if we don't, where will you be?"

"Oh, I'll be all right. I mean to support myself, anyhow, and you, too, if the plays don't go."

He laughed.

"You are an amusing mite. Queer I never noticed you before."

"You'll like me, if you continue to be aware of me. I'm nice," she laughed up at him, and he smiled back.

"How do you intend to make this fortune, may I ask?"

"I haven't decided yet. Of course I can dance. If worst came to worst, I can make a big salary dancing."

"Dancing?" he exploded.

"Yes, didn't you ever hear of it? With the feet, you know, and the body, and the eyes, and the arms. So!"

She twirled about him in a circle, like a gay little figurine. He watched her, fascinated.

"You can dance, can't you?"

"I can. At times I am quite inspired. Now, if you and the Professor will be sensible, and let me go to New York and take a job, I could support us all in luxury. You could write and he could figure."

"I don't see that it is any business of ours what you do, but I certainly won't let you support me."

"Do you really mean it isn't your business?"

"Why should it be?"

"Well, if I am your wife, and his daughter, some people would think that it was distantly related to your business."

"Why New York? Why not here?"

"In this town they think I am crazy now. But if I burst out as a professional dancer —— Wow!"

"That's so. It's a mean little town, but it's quiet. That's why I stay. It's quiet."

"You wouldn't mind my being away, if I went to New York, would you?"

"Oh, no. I'd be busy."

"That's good. I really think you are almost ideal."

"Ideal?"

"As a husband. They are usually so exacting and interfering."

"I've not decided yet to be your husband."

"But you are it."

"Suppose you should fall in love with somebody else?"

"I'm much more apt to fall in love with you."

"Heaven forbid!" he exclaimed, and came to her side quickly. "Bambi, promise me that no matter what happens you will not do that. You will not fall in love with me."

She looked at him a minute, and then laughed contagiously.

"I am serious about this. My work is everything to me. Nothing matters but just that, and it might be a dreadful interruption if you fell in love with me."

"I don't see why, unless you fell in love with me."

"No danger of that," said he, and at her laugh turned to her again. "If ever you see any signs of my being such a fool as that, you warn me, will you?"

"And what will you do then?"

"I'll run away. I will go to the ends of the earth. That particular madness is death to creative genius."

"All right. I'll warn you."

"I've got to begin to polish my first draft to-day, so I'll go upstairs and get at it."

"Will you be gone two days this trip?"

He turned to smile at her.

"Some people would think you were eccentric," he said.

"They might," she responded.

"I am almost sane when I polish," he laughed. "It's only when I create that I am crazy."

"It's all right then, is it? We go on?"

"Go on?"

"Being married?"

"Well, I have no objection, if you insist, but you'd better think over what I told you. I think you have made a mistake; and you shall never support me."

"I never think over my mistakes," said Bambi. "I just live up to them."

"I agree with your father that you risk a good deal."

"Risks are exciting."

"If you don't like it, you can divorce me the next time I am in a work fit. I'll never know it, so it will be painless."

"Jarvis, that's unfair."

He came back quickly.

"That was intended for humour," he explained.

"I so diagnosed it," she flashed back at him.

He looked down at her diminutive figure with its well-shaped, patrician head, its sensitive mouth, its wide-set, shining eyes.

"Star-shine," he smiled.

She poked him with a sharp "What?"

"You don't think I ought to — to — kiss you, possibly, do you?"

"Mercy, no!"

"Good! I was afraid you might expect something of me."

"Oh, no. Think what you have done for the girl," she quoted, and he heard her laugh down the hall and out into the garden. He took a step as if to follow her. Then, with a shake of his shoulders, he climbed the stairs to his new workshop with a smile on his lips.

III

THE Professor was working in his garden. It was one of his few relaxations, and he took it as seriously as a problem. He had great success with flowers, owing to what he called his system. He was methodical as a machine in everything he did, so the plants were fed with the regularity of hospital patients, and flourished accordingly. To-day he was in pursuit of slugs. He followed up one row, and down the next, slaying with the ruthlessness of fate.

The general effect of his garden was rather striking. He laid out each bed in the shape of an arithmetical figure. The pansy beds were in figure eights, the nasturtiums were pruned and ordered into stubby figure ones, while the asters and fall flowers ranged from fours to twenties.

The Professor carried his arithmetical sense to extremes. He insisted that figures had personality, just as people have, and it was a favourite method of his to nickname his friends and pupils according to a

numeral. He was watching the death-throes of a slug, with scientific indifference, as his son-in-law approached him, carrying a wide-brimmed hat.

"Professor Parkhurst, your daughter desires you to put on your hat. You forgot it."

"Oh, yes. Thank you!"

"I should like the opportunity of a few words with you, sir, if you can spare the time."

"Well, I cannot. My time is very precious. If you desire to walk along with me while I destroy these slugs, I will listen to what you say."

He pursued his course, and Jarvis, perforce, followed.

"I have been in your house for a week, now, Professor Parkhurst, and I have merely encountered you at meals."

"Often enough," said the Professor, making a sudden turn that almost upset Jarvis. "I go fifty steps up, and fifty steps back," he explained, and Jarvis stared at him open-mouthed.

"You count your steps?" he repeated.

"Certainly, no matter what I do, I count. When I eat, when I sleep, walk, talk, think, I always count."

"How awful! A human metronome. I must

make a note of that." And Jarvis took out a notebook to make an entry.

"You have the notebook habit?" snorted the Professor.

"Yes, I can't afford to waste ideas, suggestions, thoughts."

"Bah! A most offensive habit."

"I gather, from your general attitude," Jarvis began again, "that you dislike me."

"I neither like nor dislike you. I don't know you."

"You never will know me, at this rate."

"I am not sure that I care to."

"Why not? What have you against me?"

"You are not practical."

"Do you consider yourself practical?"

"I do. I am the acme of practical. I am mathematical."

He slew another bug.

"How can you do that?" cried Jarvis, his concern in his face. "That slug has a right to life. Why don't you get the point of view of the slug?"

"He kills my roses," justified the Professor. "He's a murderer. Society has a right to extinguish him."

"The old fallacy, a tooth for a tooth?"

"You'd sacrifice my roses to save this insect?"

"I'd teach the rose to take care of itself."

"You're crazy," he snapped, and walked on, Jarvis at his heels.

"I didn't come to quarrel with you about our views of gardening, or of life. I realize that we have no common ground. You are of the Past, and I am of the Future."

"There is nobody more modern than I am!" cried the Professor.

"Rubbish! No modern wastes his life in rows of inanimate numerals. We get out and work at humanity and its problems."

"What are the problems of humanity?"

"Food, employment, education, health."

"All of them mathematical. Economics is mathematical."

"Well, I wish instead of teaching a few thousand students higher algebra that you had taught your own daughter a little common sense."

"Common sense is not taught. It is a gift of the gods, like genius," said the Professor.

Jarvis glanced at him quickly, and took out the notebook.

"Put that thing away!" shouted the Professor. "I will not be annotated."

Jarvis meekly returned it to his pocket, but as the Professor right-about faced, he exploded:

"For heaven's sake, sit down and listen to me! This mathematical progression makes me crazy."

"I have just so many rows to do," the Professor replied, as he marched along. "Do I understand you to criticise my daughter's education?"

"I don't know anything about her education. I didn't know she had one," said Jarvis, "but this whim of hers, in marrying me, is very trying to me. It is most upsetting."

"Have it annulled. It can't possibly be legal."

"She won't hear of it. She desires to be married to me."

The Professor rose and faced him.

"Then you may as well resign yourself. I have lived with her nineteen years and I know."

"But it is absurd that a child like that should always have her own way. You have spoiled her."

Even the Professor's bent back showed pity.

"You have a great deal to learn, young man."

"Can't you persuade her to divorce me?"

"I cannot. I tried to persuade her to do that before she married you."

"I suppose you think I ought to make a living for her?"

"At the risk of being called a back number, I do."

"Just when I am beginning to count."

"Count? Count what?"

"Count as a creative artist."

"Just what is it you do, Jocelyn?"

"I try to express the Philosophy of Modernism through the medium of the Drama."

"Who buys it?"

"Nobody."

"How are you beginning to count, then?"

"Oh, not in the market-place. In my own soul."

"Forty-nine, fifty," said the Professor. "Turn here. In your own soul, you say?" He glanced at the youth beside him. "Bambi has sold her birthright for a mess of pottage," he muttered.

"That's just the question. Whose duty is it to provide the pottage?"

"Maybe you think it's mine?"

"Why shouldn't Science support Art?"

"Humph! Why not let Bambi support you? She says she wants to."

"I am willing she should support herself, but not me."

"So the only question is, will I support you?"

"Exactly. With Bambi off your hands, you will have no other responsibility, and you could not do a bigger thing for the world than to help me to instruct and inspire it."

"Aristophanes!" exclaimed the Professor. "You are unique! You are number twenty-three."

"Why twenty-three?"

"Because that is neither much nor little."

"Your daughter thinks my plays will sell, but I tell you frankly I doubt it."

"How can you instruct and inspire if nobody listens?"

"They must listen in the end, else why am I here?"

The Professor relinquished his chase, to stare again. "You are at least sincere in your belief in yourself — twenty-three. I'd like to hear some of these great ideas of yours."

"Very well. I am going to read a play to your daughter this evening. If you care to come, you may listen. Then you will see that it would pay you to stake me for a couple of years."

"I'll come and listen."

"If you decide to undertake me, I insist that you

shall not continue this scornful avoidance of me. If we three are to live together, we must live in harmony, which is necessary to my work."

"Whose favour is this, yours or mine?"

"Favour? Good heavens! you don't think it is a favour to give me food and a roof for two years, do you? I thought it was an opportunity for you."

The Professor, not easily moved to mirth, did an imitation of laughter, holding both his sides. Jarvis turned his charming, boyish smile upon him, and walked up the path to the house. Strange what things amused Bambi and her parent!

That night, after dinner, Bambi arranged the electric reading light in the screened porch, drew a big chair beside it, placed the Professor's favourite chaise-lounge near by, and got him into it. Then she went in search of her performer. She looked all over the house for him, to finally discover him on the top floor in hiding.

"Come on! I've got everything all ready, even the Professor."

"I am terrified," Jarvis admitted. "Suppose you should not understand what I have written? Suppose you thought it was all rubbish?"

"If I think so, I will say so. Isn't that the idea? You are trying it on the dog to see if it goes?"

"If you think it is rubbish, don't say anything."

"How silly! If you are spending your time on trash, you ought to know it, and get over it, and begin to write sense."

"I feel like one of the Professor's slugs," he muttered.

"Better try us on the simplest one."

"Well, I will read you 'Success.' "

She ran downstairs, and he followed, to the piazza.

There was no sign of the Professor.

"Ardelia," called Bambi, "where is the Professor?"

"I don't know, ma'am. I seen him headed for the garden."

"Professor Parkhurst, come in here!" Bambi called. "We are to hear Jarvis's play."

"Oh, that is it. I couldn't remember why I was placed in that chair, and Ardelia couldn't remember. So it occurred to me that I had forgotten my trowel," he said. He put the trowel, absent-mindedly, in the tea basket, and took the seat arranged for Jarvis.

"Here, you sit in your regular seat," Bambi objected, hauling him up.

"That isn't wise, my dear. I am sure to go to sleep."

"We'll see that you don't," she laughed.

"I've never heard a play read aloud that I can remember," said the Professor.

"You will probably be very irritating, then. Don't interrupt me. If you fumble things, or make a noise, I'll stop."

"That knowledge helps some," retorted the Professor, with a twinkle. "If I can't stand it, I'll whistle."

"Be quiet," said his daughter. "Go ahead, Jarvis."

"What is this play supposed to be about?" Professor Parkhurst inquired.

"The title is 'Success.' It is about a woman who sold herself for success, and paid with her soul."

"Is it a comedy?"

"Good Lord, no! I don't try to make people laugh. I make them think."

"Go ahead."

"Don't interrupt again, father."

Jarvis began to read, nervously at first, then with greater confidence. He read intelligently, but without dramatic value, and Bambi longed to seize the

manuscript and do it herself. Once, during the first act, the Professor cleared his throat.

"Don't do that!" said Jarvis, without pausing for the Professor's hasty apology.

The play told the story of a woman whose God was Success. She sacrificed everything to him. First her mother and father were offered up, that she might have a career. Then her lover. She married a man she did not love, that she might mount one step higher, and finally she sacrificed her child to her devouring ambition. When she reached the goal she had visioned from the first, she was no longer a human being, with powers of enjoyment or suffering. She was, instead, a monster, incapable of appreciating what she had won, and in despair she killed herself.

There were big scenes, some bold, telling strokes, in Jarvis's handling of his theme. Again, it was utterly lacking in drama. The author stopped the action and took to the pulpit.

At the end of the first act he stopped and looked at the faces of his audience. The Professor was awake and deeply puzzled. This strange young man was holding up to his view a perfectly strange anomaly which he called a woman. The Professor

had never dreamed of such a hybrid. He couldn't grasp it. He gasped at Jarvis's audacity.

Bambi sat curled up in the end of a wicker couch, her feet drawn under her, like a Chinese idol, every nerve attuned to attention. He noticed how, without words, she seemed to emanate responsiveness and understanding.

"Well?" he said.

"Let's wait until you have finished to discuss it," she said.

"Is it any good?"

"In spots it's great. In other spots it is incredibly rotten."

"My child," protested the Professor.

"Go on!" she ordered.

The second act began well, mounted halfway to its climax, and fell flat. Some of the lines, embodying the new individualistic philosophy of woman, roused the Professor to protest.

"Rubbish, sir!" he cried. "Impossible rubbish! No woman ever thought such things."

"Take your nose out of your calculus, and look about you, Professor," retorted Jarvis. "You haven't looked around since the stone age."

Bambi gurgled with laughter, then looked serious.

"He's fallen on an idea just the same, Jarvis. Your woman isn't convincing."

"But she's true," he protested.

"We don't care a fig whether she's true, unless she's true to us," she answered him. "Go on with your last act."

"You don't like it — what's the use?"

"Don't be silly. I am deeply interested. Go on!"

He began a little hopelessly, feeling the atmosphere, by that subtle sense that makes the creative artist like a sensitive plant where his work is at stake. The third act failed to ascend, or to resolve the situation. He merely carried it as far as it interested him, and then dropped it. As he closed the manuscript Bambi reached out her hand for it.

"Give it to me, in my hand!" she ordered. He obeyed, questioningly.

"I feel as if it was such a big thing, mangled and bleeding. I want to hold it and help it."

"Mangled?"

"Yes. Don't you feel it? She isn't a woman! She's a monster. You don't believe her. You won't believe her, because you hate her."

"But she's true. She lives to-day. She is the woman of now," he repeated.

"No, no, no! Woman may approximate this, but she doesn't reason it out. Let her be fine, and big, and righteously ambitious. Make us sympathize with her."

"But I am preaching against her."

"All the better. Make her a tragedy. Show the futility of it all. She didn't kill herself. You killed her."

"Do you write plays?" he asked her.

"No, but I feel drama. This is big, but it is all man psychology. You don't know your woman."

"I should hope not," said the Professor. "You needn't tell me there are such women in the world. She is worse than Lucretia Borgia."

"Of course she is in the world, Father Professor. You haven't looked at a woman since mother died, nineteen years ago, so you are not strictly up-to-date."

"I have hundreds of young women in my classes."

"Learning Euclid," interpolated Jarvis.

"Well, Euclid is more desirable than what your heroine learned and taught."

"Not at all. She learned life."

The Professor turned to Bambi.

"Have you any ideas in common with this person, my dear?"

"Oh, yes, some. All of us are freebooters in this generation."

"Why have you never spoken to me of them?"

"Oh, Professor, I never bother you with ideas. Jarvis, I think if you do it over, you could sell it."

"I hate doing things over — the spontaneity all gone."

"Well, you've got to do it over, that's all. You've murdered that woman, and it is wicked. She must be resuscitated and given another chance."

"Will you help me?"

She looked at him with a quick flash of pleasure.

"Oh, I would so love to. I can't help you build it, but I can tell you what I feel is wrong."

"We will begin to-morrow."

"Are all your works as extreme as this?" queried the Professor.

"They are all cross-sections of life, which is extreme," replied Jarvis.

"You young people read riddles into life. It is as simple as two plus two is four."

"There you are — two plus two does not necessarily make four. It makes five or forty. It depends on the symbols. Nothing in the world is

exact, or final. Everything is changeable, fluidic. That's the whole fabric of modern thought."

The Professor's horrified glance was turned upon them.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear, there you go, upsetting everything. You are a pair of maniacs, both of you. You ought to be shut away from people, with your wild ideas."

He rushed out into his garden, sure of its calm, its mathematical exactness. He was really disturbed by the ultra-modern theories these ardent young iconoclasts forced him to consider.

"Poor Father Professor," laughed Bambi, at his retreat.

"Why do you let him stay back there in the Middle Ages?"

"He's happier there. It's peaceful. Modern times distress him so when he remembers them."

"I suppose you are not an average family, are you?" he asked.

"I suppose not," she admitted.

"You are irritating, but interesting."

"I warn you to let father alone. He's too old to be hauled up-to-date. Just consider him an interesting survival and let him be."

"I'll let him be. I'll put him in a play. He's good copy."

"He'll never know himself, so it won't matter."

They talked late about Jarvis's work, his methods of writing, the length of time it took him to conceive and work out a play. It all fascinated Bambi. She felt that a wonderful interest had come into her life. A new thing was to be created, each day, under her roof, near her. She was to have part in it, help in its shaping to perfection. She gloated over the days to come, and a warm rush of gratitude to Jarvis for bringing her this sense of his need of her made her burst out:

"Oh, life is such fun!"

He looked at her closely.

"You are a queer little mite," said he.

"The mite is mightier than the sword," she laughed, starting for the garden. "You go to bed, so you can get an early start on that play. I'll round up the Professor. He's forgotten to bring himself in."

He obeyed without objection. He felt, all at once, like a ship at anchor after long years of floating aimlessly, but, manlike, he took his good fortune as his just right, and it never occurred to him to thank Bambi for his new sense of peace and well-being.

IV

THE marriage of Jarvis and Bambi furnished the town with a ten days' topic of conversation, a fact to which they were perfectly indifferent. Then it was accepted, as any other wonder, such as a comet passing, or an airship disaster.

In the meantime the strangely assorted trio fell into a more or less comfortable relationship. Jarvis and the Professor almost came to blows, but for the most part the diplomatic Bambi kept peace. Both men appealed to her for everything and she took care of them like babies. She called them the "Heavenly Twins" and found endless amusement in their dependence on her. Sometimes she did not see Jarvis for days. His study and bedroom were on the top floor, and when he was in a work fit he forgot to come to meals. She let him alone, only seeing that he ate what she sent up to him. Sometimes his light burned all night. She would go to the foot of the stairs and listen to him reading scenes aloud in the early dawn, but she never interfered

with him in any way. He plunged into the remaking of "Success" with characteristic abandon. He destroyed the old version entirely, and began on a new one. When he had the framework completed, he summoned Bambi for a private view. She condemned certain parts, praised others, flashed new thoughts upon him, forced him to new viewpoints. He raved at her, defended his ideas, refuted her arguments, and invariably accepted every contribution. When he came to an impasse, he howled through the house for her, like a lost child wailing for its mother.

These daily councils of war, his incessant need of her, interfered with her plan of a career as a danseuse. She found that her days were resolving themselves into two portions — times when Jarvis needed her, and times when he did not. The hours they devoted together to his work constituted the core of her day, her happy time. She considered Jarvis as impersonally as she did the typewriter. It was the sense of being needed, of helping in his work, that filled her with such new zest. But the hours hung heavy between the third-floor summons, and one day, as she lay in the hammock, a book in her hand, it came to her that she might try it herself. She might put down her thoughts, her dreams, her

ambitions, and make a story of them. Thought and action were one with Bambi. In five minutes' time she had pencil and paper, and had set forth on her new adventure.

For the next few days she was so absorbed in her experiment that she almost neglected the "Heavenly Twins." The Professor commented on her abstraction, and Ardelia complained that "everybody in dis heah house is crazy, all of them studyin' and writin'; yo' cain't even sing a hallelujah but somebody is a shoutin', 'Sh!' "

Only Jarvis failed to note any change. It was too much to expect that the great Jocelyn could concentrate on any but his own mental attitudes.

Like most facile people, Bambi was bored with her masterpiece at the end of a week, and abandoned it without a sigh. She decided that literature was not to be enriched by her. In fact, she never gave a thought to her first-born child until a month after its birth, when a New York magazine fell into her hands offering a prize of $500 for a short story. She took out her manuscript and read it over with a sense of surprise. She marched off to a stenographer, had it typed, and sent it to the contest, using a pen name as a signature, and then she promptly forgot about it.

Six weeks more of hard labour brought "Success" almost to completion. Bambi was absorbed in the play. It was undoubtedly much better; her hopes were high that it would get a production. If only Jarvis could get to New York with it and show it to the managers; but that meant money, and they had none. Her busy brain spent hours scheming, but no light came.

Then out of the blue fell a shining bolt! A long envelope, with a magazine imprint on it, came with her morning's mail and nearly ended a young and useful life. The editor begged to inform her that the committee of judges had awarded her the short-story prize, that her tale would be published in the forthcoming issue, and she would please find check enclosed. Had she any other manuscript that they might see? Would she honour them with a visit the next time she came to New York? They would like to talk over a series of stories similar to the prize winner.

The Professor and Jarvis had both departed to their lairs, or they would have witnessed the best pas seul of Bambi's life. She fluttered the joy-bringing letter above her head, and circled the breakfast room in a whirl of happiness. Ardelia entered as she reached her climax.

BAMBI FLUTTERED THE JOY-BRINGING LETTER ABOVE HER HEAD AND CIRCLED THE BREAKFAST-ROOM IN A WHIRL OF HAPPINESS

"Mah good Lud, Miss Bambi, yo' sho' can dance better'n Jezebel! I 'low the debil do git into yo', the way yo' all dance! Go 'way frum me! Don' yo' drag me into no cunjer dance."

"Ardelia, the gods do provide!" cried Bambi. "Such unutterably crazy good luck — to think of my getting it!"

"Did yo' get a lottery prize, Miss Bambi?"

"That's just what I got — a lottery prize."

"Foh the Lud's sake! What you gwine to do with it?"

"I am going to take Jarvis Jocelyn to New York, and between us we are going to harness Fame and drive her home."

"Well, I don' know who Fame is, but if she's a hoss, wher' yo' goin' to keep her when yo' get her? We ain't got no barn for her."

Bambi laughed.

"We'll stable her all right, Ardelia, if we can catch her. This is a secret between you and me. Don't you breathe it to a soul that I have won anything."

"No, ma'am; yo' kin trust me to the death."

"I'll bring you a present from New York if you won't tell."

She rushed off to her own room, to look over her

clothes and plan. Having married Jarvis out of hand, she would now take him on a moneymoon; they would seek their fortune instead of love. He would peddle his play; she would honour the publisher with a visit. She hugged herself with joy over the prospect. She worked out various schemes by which she could break it to Jarvis and the Professor that she had money enough for a trip to New York, without saying how she got it. Fortunately, they were not of an inquiring mind, so she hoped that she could convince them without much difficulty. She tried out a scene or two just to prove how she would do it. At luncheon she paved the way.

"How much more work is there on the play, Jarvis?"

"I ought to finish it this week," he answered. "It is good, too. It is a first-rate play."

"You ought to go to New York with it, and see the managers," she said.

"Ugh!"

"Well, it's got to be done. You can't teach school unless you have pupils."

"I am not a pedant," he protested.

"You're a reformer, and you've got to get something to reform."

"The work itself satisfies me."

"It doesn't satisfy me. You have got to produce and learn before you will grow."

"You're a wise body for such a small package."

"That's the way wisdom comes."

"Perhaps, O sibyl, you will read the future and tell me how I am to finance a trip to New York."

"Oh, the money will be provided," airily.

"Yes, I suppose it will. It always is when actual need demands it, but how?"

"Never mind how. Just rest in the assurance that it will."

He looked at her, smiling.

"Do you know I sometimes suspect that Fate had a hand in bringing us together? We are so alike."

"We are so alike we're different," she amended, laughing.

She waited until next day to explode her bomb.

"I think if you finish up the play this week, Jarvis, we can have it typed early next week, and get off to New York on Friday or Saturday."

He stared at her.

"On foot?" he inquired.

"Oh, no. I find I have the money."

"You find you have it! You had that much and

didn't know it?" he exploded so loudly that the Professor came to, and paid attention.

"I am careless about these things," Bambi murmured.

"What's all this?" queried the Professor.

"What I can't see is that if you had money enough to pay up my board bill, why you married me," continued Jarvis.

"Just one of my whims. I am so whimsical," retorted Bambi.

"Would you mind telling me?" begged the Professor.

"She's got money enough to take us to New York," repeated Jarvis.

"Thank you. I don't wish to go to that terrible place. Of all the distressing, improbable places, New York is the worst," replied Professor Parkhurst.

"Be calm, Professor. I was not planning to take you," soothed his daughter.

"But what is to be done with me?" he inquired, anxiously.

"You are to be left the one sole duty of Ardelia, to be overfed and pampered until you aren't fit to live with."

"But you can't go off alone with Jarvis."

"Why not? I am married to him."

"Yes, I suppose you are, but you seem so unmarried," he objected.

"We will have to practise up a few married poses, Jarvis. You must not act so interested in me. Father says we don't act married."

"I am not in the least interested in you," Jarvis defended himself, valiantly.

"There, father, could anything be more husband-like?"

"Where did you get the money, Jarvis?" the Professor asked.

"I didn't get it. She got it."

"Why, my dear," protested her father, "where did you get any money?"

"I have turned lady burglar."

"What?"

"Cheer up. It's butter-'n'-eggs money."

"Butter-'n'-eggs money?" repeated Jarvis.

"Certainly. The downtrodden farmer's wife always gives up her butter-'n'-eggs money to save the family fortunes, or build a new barn."

"What are you talking about?" interrupted the Professor.

"I don't know why the fact that I have a little

money saved up should start a riot in this family. I have to go to New York on business, and as Jarvis has to go to see managers about 'Success,' I merely proposed that we go together."

"What business have you in New York, my dear?"

"My own, Professor darling."

"Excuse me," he hastened to add.

"Certainly," she replied, blithely.

"I hate New York," said Jarvis. "How long do you suppose we will have to stay?"

"I adore New York, and we will stay as long as the money holds out."

"Would you mind stating, in round figures, how much you have?" the Professor remarked.

"I would. I detest figures, round or oblong. I have enough."

"I hope you won't get there, and then call on me for a supply, as you usually do, my dear. I am a little short this spring."

"You two have no confidence in me. If you will just put your trust in Bambi, I'll mend the fortunes of this family so you will never be able to find the patch."

The two men laughed in spite of themselves, and the matter was dropped, but Bambi herself took the

manuscript of "Success" to the stenographer, with strict orders as to a time limit; she led Jarvis, protesting, to a tailor's, to order a suit of clothes; she restocked him in collars, shirts, and ties. In fact, she handled the situation like a diplomat, buying the railroad tickets with a thrill of anticipation.

Jarvis made no protest at all, until the night before they were to start. He came to her and offered her a little black notebook.

"What is this?"

"I want you to put down every cent we spend. This is a loan, you understand."

"It's a gift from the gods. Go offer libations. I don't want your old debit and credit book."

He laid his hand on her shoulder, and looked into her shining eyes.

"Good little fairy," he said, "I want to put some gold dust in the pot, too."

"Wait until we get to the end of the rainbow."

"Just keep a record for me. My mind is such a sieve," he said, offering the spurned black book.

"All right. Give me the Black Maria. I will ride your figures in it."

"That was a pun. You ought to be spanked."

"Oh, Jarvis, isn't it fun?" she cried to him.

"Is it? I feel that turning salesman and approaching a manager is like marching to the block."

"Poor old dreamer! Suppose you stay home, and let me peddle the play."

"Not much. I will shoulder my own pack."

"I feel like a Crusader myself. I'd rather be *me* than anybody on earth."

"The most extraordinary thing about you is your rapture," he commented, seriously.

She ran away, singing "Then Longen folke to go on Pilgrimauges."

The next day they set forth on their journey. Bambi left lists all over the house as reminders for the Professor. Ardelia had orders enough to manœuvre an army. The Professor went to the station with them, and absent-mindedly kissed Jarvis goodbye, which infuriated his victim and nearly sent Bambi into hysterics. As the train pulled out, she leaned from the window and called, "Go home, now, Professor!" and with a mechanical jerk he turned and started off in the direction indicated.

"I never leave him with any comfort," she admitted to Jarvis. "He is so apt to mislay himself."

"He always makes me think of a mechanical toy, ever since he told me that he always counted what-

ever he did. I am sure that you wind him up, like a watch, every night."

"Poor old dear! Funny I should have chosen him for a father, isn't it?"

"I think your choice of relations is distinctly queer."

"My queer relations! That's a good title. Everybody would understand it at once."

"Thank heaven, I haven't any, queer, or otherwise."

"Didn't you ever have any?"

"No."

"Just growed?"

He nodded.

"I remember a funny old man you lived with, when I first knew you. Wasn't he a relative?"

"No, he found me some place. What's the difference? Do you care?"

"No, I'm glad. I am sure I couldn't abide 'in-laws.'"

Over the luncheon table he suddenly looked at her, as if for the first time. He noticed that all the eyes in the crowded diner were upon her.

"What's the matter?" she asked, intercepting his glance.

"Do people always stare at you?" he inquired.

She swept the car with an indifferent glance.

"I don't know. I never noticed."

"It's queer for us to be going off like this," he said, in a startled tone.

"It seems perfectly natural to me. Are you embarrassed?" she asked, suddenly aware of a new quality in him.

"No, certainly not," he defended himself.

It was five o'clock when they drew into Grand Central Station, a time when the whole duty of man seems to be to get out of New York and into the suburbs. An army of ants ran through the great blue-vaulted rotunda, streaming into the narrow tunnels, where the steel horses were puffing and steaming. The sense of rushing waters was upon Jarvis. He halted, stunned and helpless.

"Isn't it great? All the tribes of Shem, Ham, and Japhet," cried Bambi, at his elbow. She piloted him through — big, powerful, bewildered Jarvis. Many a hurrying suburbanite slowed up enough to look after them, the tall, blond giant, and a little girl with shining eyes.

"Where are we going?" Jarvis asked, with child-like confidence that she would know.

"GOOD EVENING, MRS. NEW YORK, AND ALL YOU PEOPLE OUT THERE! WE'RE HERE, JARVIS AND I"

"Gramercy Park. We'll put up at a club. We'll act rich and take a taxi."

She ordered the driver to go down the avenue slowly, and as he jolted around the crowded corner of Forty-second Street, on to the smooth asphalt, Bambi leaned forward eagerly.

"Good evening, home of the books," she nodded to the Library. "Good evening, Mrs. New York, and all you people there! We're here, Jarvis and I."

She turned and caught his rare smile.

"You're happy, aren't you?" he remarked.

"Perfectly. I feel as if I were breathing electricity. Don't you like all these people?"

"No, I feel that there are too many of them. There should be half as many, and better done. Until we learn not to breed like rabbits, we will never accomplish a creditable race."

"Such good-looking rabbits though, Jarvis."

"Yes. Sleek and empty-headed."

"All hopping uptown, to nibble something," she chuckled.

"Life is such foolishness," he said, in disgust.

"Oh, no. Life is such ecstasy," she threw back at him, as the cab drew up to the clubhouse door.

V

BAMBI was out of bed and at her window the next morning early. Her room faced on Gramercy Park, and the early morning sun fell across the little square so sacred to the memory of past glories, and bathed the trees in their new green drapery with a soft, impressionistic colour. Her eyes swept around the square, hastening over the great white apartment buildings, our modern atrocities, to linger over the old houses, which her swift imagination peopled with the fashion and pomp of another day.

"Spring in the city!" breathed Bambi. "Spring in New York!"

She was tempted to run to Jarvis's door and tap him awake, to drink it in too, but she remembered that Jarvis did not care for the flesh-pots, so she enjoyed her early hour alone. It was very quiet in the Park; only an occasional milk wagon rattled down the street. There is a sort of hush that comes at that hour, even in New York. The early traffic is out of the way.

The day's work is not yet begun. There comes a pause before the opening gun is fired in the warfare of the day.

Many a gay-hearted girl has sat, as Bambi sat, looking off over the housetops in this "City of Beautiful Nonsense," dreaming her dreams of conquest and success. Youth makes no compromise with life. It demands all, passionately; loses all, or wins, with anguish of spirit. So it was with Bambi, the high-handed, imperious little mite. She willed Fame and Fortune for Jarvis and herself in full measure. She wanted to count in this great mælstrom of a city. She wanted two pedestals — one for Jarvis and one for herself — to lift them above the crowd. If all the young things who think such thoughts as these, in hall bedrooms and attic chambers, could mount their visioned pedestals, the traffic police would be powerless, and all the road to Albany lined like a Hall of Fame.

But, fortunately, our practical heroine took no account of failure. She planned a campaign for Jarvis. She would go first to Belasco with his play. Mr. Belasco would receive him at once, recognize a master mind, and accept the play after an immediate hearing. Of course Jarvis would insist on

reading his play aloud, so that Mr. Belasco might get the points clearly. He would come away with a thousand dollars advance royalty in his pocket, and then would come the delicious excitement of rehearsals, in which she would help. She saw Jarvis before the curtain making a first-night's speech. A brilliant series of pictures followed, with the Jarvis Jocelyns as central figures, surrounded by the wealth and brains of New York, London, Paris!

While Jarvis was mounting like a meteor, she was making a reputation as a writer. When her place in the literary ranks was so assured that the *Saturday Evening Post* accepted her stories without so much as reading them; when everybody was asking "Who is this brilliant writer? — this combination of O. Henry, Edith Wharton, and W. D. Howells?" then, and only then, would she come out from behind her *nom-de-plume* and assume her position as Mrs. Jarvis Jocelyn, wife of the famous playwright.

So absorbed was she in her moving pictures that Jarvis's rap sounded to her like a cannon shot.

"Yes? Who is it?" she called.

"Jarvis," he answered. "Are you ready for breakfast?"

"Just a minute," she prevaricated. "Wait for me in the library."

She plunged into her tub and donned her clothes in record time. Fortunately, Jarvis did not fret over her tardiness. He was lost in an article on the drama in a current magazine.

"Good morrow, my liege lord," quoth Bambi, radiant, fresh, bewitching.

"This man has no standards at all," he replied, out of the magazine.

She quietly closed it and took it from him.

"I prefer to test the breakfast standards of this club," she laughed. "Did you sleep?" she added.

"I always sleep."

"Let's play to-day," she added, over the coffee cups.

"Play?"

"Yes. We've never been anywhere together before. I've put aside an appropriation for amusement. I say we draw on that to-day."

"All right. Where shall we go?"

"Let's go on top of the stage to Claremont for lunch, and then we might see some pictures this afternoon, dine here, and the theatre to-night."

"Had it all thought out, did you?"

"What would you plan?" she inquired.

"We will do my way to-morrow, and your way to-day," he said.

"All right. I promise to enjoy your way if you will promise to enjoy mine, not just endure it scornfully."

"You must think I'm a boor."

"No. But I think that until you learn that an artist cannot afford to scorn any phase of life that is human, you will never do great work."

He looked at her keenly.

"Fifth Avenue isn't human. It's an imitation," he objected.

"You're very young, Jarvis," she commented.

"Upon my soul," he laughed, so spontaneously that an old fogy at the next table said audibly to his waitress, "Bride and groom," and for some reason Bambi resented it with a flare of colour.

"It's true," she continued; "until you realize that Fifth Avenue and the Bowery are as inevitable as the two ends of the teeter-totter, you won't see the picture true."

"Sometimes you show a most surprising poise," he granted her. "But of course you are not the stuff of which creative artists are made."

She chuckled, and patted her bag where the bill fold lay, with its crisp hundreds due to some imitation of creative impulse.

"Just where, and in what, am I lacking?" she asked, most humbly.

"A creative artist would not care a fig for truth. He creates an impression of truth out of a lie if necessary."

"But I am in the direct line from Ananias," she protested. "I inherit creative talent of that brand."

So they laughed and chattered, in the first real companionship they had ever known.

True to the plan, they ascended the stage at Eighteenth Street, Bambi in a flutter of happiness. As the panorama of that most fascinating highway unrolled before them, she constantly touched this and that and the other object with the wand of her vivid imagination. Jarvis watched her with amused astonishment, for the first time really thoroughly aware of her. Again he noticed that wherever she was she was a lodestone for all eyes. He decided that it was not beauty, in the strictest sense of the word, but a sort of radiance which emanated from her like an aura.

Twenty-third Street cut across their path with

its teeming throngs. Madison Square lay smiling in the sunshine like a happy courtesan, with no hint of its real use as Wayside Inn for all the old, the poor, the derelict, whose tired feet could find refuge there. The vista of the avenue lay ahead.

"It's like a necklace of sparkling pearls," Bambi said, with incessant craning of her neck. "I feel like standing up and singing 'The Song of the Bazaars.' There isn't a stuff, nor a silk, nor a gem from Araby to Samarkand that isn't here."

"It bewitches you, doesn't it?" Jarvis commented.

"Think of the wonder of it! Camel trains, and caravans, merchant ships on all the seas, trains, and electric trucks, all bringing the booty of the world to this great, shining bazaar for you and me. It's thrilling."

"So it is," he agreed. "I hope you mark the proportion of shops for men — dresses, hats, jewels, furs, motor clothes, tea rooms, candy shops, corsetières, florists, bootmakers, all for women. Motor cars are full of women. Are there no men in this menagerie?"

"No. They are all cliff-dwellers downtown. They probably wear loin cloths of a fashionable cut," she laughed back at him.

"They all look just alike — so many manikins

on parade. I suppose there are distinctions in class. There must be some shopgirls in this crowd. Can you distinguish them?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. Not by cut, for the general line is the same for 'Judy O'Grady and the Captain's Lady,' but there is a subtle difference to the feminine eye."

"But you don't look like all the rest of them."

"No, alas, I look distinctly suburban. All I need is a package to make the disguise complete. Oh, Jarvis, do let's hurry and make much red gold, so I can look like these finished things that trip up Fifth Avenue."

"You want to be like them — like those dolls?" he scorned, with a magnificent gesture.

"Yes. I'd like to be so putrid with wealth that I could have rows of wardrobe trunks, with full sets of clothes for every me."

"How many of you are there?"

"Oh, lots. I've never counted myself. Some days I'd dress up like a Broadway siren, some days I'd be a Fifth Avenue lady, or a suburbanite, or a reformer, or a ballet dancer, or a visitor from Boston."

"What would I be doing while you were all these?"

"Oh, you'd be married to all of us. We'd keep you busy."

"The idea is appalling. A harem of misfits."

"We'd be good for your character."

"And death to my work."

"You'd know more about life when you had taken a course of us."

"Too much knowledge is a dangerous thing," he remarked. "Shall we get off and go into the Library?"

"Not to-day. That's part of your day. I want just people and things in mine."

"What are you to-day?" he inquired.

"An houri, a soulless houri," she retorted.

As they approached the University Club, Jarvis recognized it with scorn.

"Monument to the stupidity of modern education, probably full this minute of provincials from Harvard and Yale, all smugly resting in the assurance that they are men of culture."

"I adore the way you demolish worlds," Bambi sparkled up at him.

"Another monument," he remarked, indicating a new church lifting its spires among the money-changers' booths.

"*Hic jacet* education and religion. Look at that slim white lady called the Plaza."

"You ought to name her 'Miss New York.'"

"Good, Jarvis. In time you will learn to play with me."

He frowned slightly.

"I know," she added, "I am scheduled under *Interruptions* in that famous notebook. Unless you play with me occasionally I shall become actively interruptive."

"You are as clever as a squirrel," he said. "Always hiding things and finding them."

"*Hic jacet* Bambi, along with the other self-important, modern institutions," she sighed humbly.

They rattled across the Circle and up Broadway. Bambi was silent, bored with its stupidity. It was not until they turned on to Riverside Drive that her enthusiasm bubbled up again.

"Don't you love rivers?" she exclaimed, as the Hudson sparkled at them in the sun.

"I've never known any," he replied.

"Oh, Mr. Hudson, Mr. Jocelyn," she said, instantly. "I thought, of course, you had met."

"You absurdity!" laughed Jarvis. "What is it that you love about rivers?"

"Oh, their subtlety, I suppose. They look and act so aimless, and they are going somewhere all the time. They are lazy and useful and — wet. I like them."

"Is there anything in the universe you don't like?" Jarvis inquired.

"Yes, but I can't think what it is just now," she answered, and sang "Ships of mine are floating — will they all come home?" so zestfully that an old gentleman in the front seat turned, with a smiling "I hope so, my dear!"

She nodded back at him gayly, to Jarvis's annoyance. As they approached Grant's Tomb, she glanced at him suspiciously. When they got safely by, she sighed with content.

"If you had said anything bromidic about Grant's Tomb, Jarvis Jocelyn, I should have thrown myself off the top of the stage to certain death."

"At times you underestimate me," he replied.

At Claremont, Bambi ordered a most enticing repast, and they were very gay. Everybody seemed gay, too. The sun shone, the early spring air was soft, and a certain gala "stolen sweets" air of Claremont made it seem their most intimate meal.

Everybody smiled at Bambi and she smiled back.

"Nice sort of hookey place, isn't it?" she commented.

"Do you know the man at the next table?"

"Which one?"

"The fat one, who is staring so."

"Oh, no. I thought you meant the one who lifts his glass to me every time he drinks."

Jarvis pushed back his chair furiously.

"I will smash his head," he said, rising.

"Jarvis! Sit down! You silly thing! He's only in fun. It's the spirit of the place."

"I won't have you toasted by strange men," he thundered.

"All right. I'll make a face at him next time," she said, soothingly; but somewhere, down in the depths of her being, where her cave ancestor lurked, she was pleased. As they finished their coffee, Bambi picked up the check, which the waiter laid beside Jarvis's plate.

"Do you mind my paying it? Would you rather do it?"

"Certainly not. It's your money. Why should I pretend about it?"

She could have hugged him for it. Instead, she overfeed the waiter.

"It's too heavenly, out of doors, for pictures, after all," she said, as they came out on to the drive. "What shall we do?"

"Let's get that double-decker again, and ride until we come to the end of the world."

"Righto. Here it comes, now."

Downtown they went, to Washington Square, where they dismounted, to wander off at random. All at once they were in another world. It was like an Alice in Wonderland adventure. They stepped out of the quiet of the green, shady quadrangle into a narrow street, swarming with life.

Innumerable children, everywhere, shrieking and running at games. Fat mothers and babies along the curb, bargaining with pushcart men. A wheezing hurdy-gurdy, with every other note gone to the limbo of lost chords, rasped and leaked jerky tunes. All the shops had foreign names on the windows — not even an "English spoken here" sign. The fresh wind blew down the dirty street, and peppered everything with dust. Newspapers increased their circulation in a most irritating manner under foot. The place was hideous, lifting its raucous cry to the fair spring sky.

Jarvis looked at Bambi, silenced, for once. Her face registered a loud protest.

"Well?" he challenged her.

"Oh, I hate ugliness so. It's like pain. Is it very weak of me to hate ugliness?" she begged.

"It's very natural, and no doubt weak."

"I wouldn't mind the thought of poverty so much — not hunger, nor thirst, nor cold — but dirt and hideousness — they are too terrible."

"This is life in the raw. You like it dressed for Fifth Avenue better," he taunted.

"Do you prefer this?"

"Infinitely."

She looked about again, with a sense of having missed his point.

"Because it's fight, hand-to-throat fight?"

"Yes. You can teach these people. They don't know anything. They are dumb beasts. You can give them tongue. It's too late to teach your Upper End."

A woman passed close, with a baby, covered with great sores. Bambi caught at Jarvis's sleeve and tottered a step.

"I feel a little sick," she faltered.

He caught her hand through his arm, and hurried her quickly back the way they had come. As they mounted the stage, he looked at her white face.

"We will have to expurgate life for you, Miss Mite."

"No, no. I want it all. I must get hardened."

Back at the club, she hurried into her hot bath, with a vague hope of washing off all traces of that awful street. But their talk at dinner was desultory and rather serious. Jarvis talked for the most part, elaborating schemes of social reform and the handling of our immigrant brothers.

They started off to the theatre, with no definite plan. Bambi's spirits rose to the lights of Broadway, like a trout to a silver shiner. There is a hectic joyousness on Broadway, a personification of the "Eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die" spirit which warms you, like champagne, or chills you, like the icy hand of despair, according to your mood. Bambi skipped along beside Jarvis, twittering gayly.

"People are happy, aren't they?"

"Surface veneer."

"Jarvis, you old bogie-man, hiding in the dark, to jump out and say 'Boo!'"

"That's my work — booing frauds. Let's go in here," he added.

"'Damaged Goods,'" Bambi read on the theatre poster. "Do you know anything about it?"

"I've read it. It is not amusing," he added.

She followed him without replying. The theatre was packed with a motley audience of unrelated people. Professors and their wives, reformers, writers, mothers with adolescent sons, mothers with young daughters — what, in Broadway parlance, is called a "high-brow" audience — a striking group of people gathered together to mark a daring experiment of our audacious times; a surgical clinic on a social sore, up to this moment hidden, neglected, whispered about.

Bambi came to it with an open mind. She had heard of Brieux, his dramatic tracts, but she had not seen the text of this play, nor was she prepared for it. The first act horrified her into silence during the whole intermission. The second act racked her with sobs, and the last act piled up the agony to the breaking point. They made their way out to the street, part of that quiet audience which scarcely spoke, so deep was the impression of the play.

Broadway glared and grinned and gambolled, goat-like. Bambi clung to Jarvis tightly. He looked down at her swollen face, red eyes, and bewildered mouth without a word. He put her into a taxicab and got in after her. In silence she looked out at the glittering white way.

"The veneer is all rubbed off. I can see only bones," she said, and caught her breath in a sob.

Jarvis awkwardly took her hand and patted it.

"I am sorry we went to that play to-night. You must not feel things so," he added.

"Didn't you feel it?"

"I felt it, didactically, but not dramatically. It's a big sermon and a poor play."

"I feel as if I had had an appendicitis operation, and I am glad it is over."

"I must meet young Richard Bennett. He has contributed to the big issues of the day. He's a fine actor. He must be an intelligent man."

For the rest of the way they drove in silence.

"Tired?" Jarvis asked as they neared the club.

She looked so little and crumpled, with all the shine drowned in her eyes.

"Life has beaten me raw to-day," she answered him, with a shadowy smile.

VI

BAMBI announced the next morning that she had to have an entire day in which to get over "Damaged Goods." Jarvis was nothing loath to put off the evil hour when he was to start on his manager-hunt. So they agreed on one more day of freedom.

The clouds threatened, so they looked over the papers for an announcement of picture exhibitions, concerts, and lectures. The choice was bewildering. They finally decided on a morning lecture, at Berkeley Lyceum, entitled "The Religion of the Democrat." They made their way to the little theatre, in a leisurely manner, to find the street blocked with motor cars, the sidewalk and foyer crowded with fashionable women, fully half an hour before the lecture was announced. Distracted ushers tried to find places for the endless stream of ardent culturites, until even the stage was invaded and packed in solid rows.

"This is astonishing," said Jarvis. "What on earth do these fine birds care for democracy?"

"Must be the lecturer," said wise Bambi.

"Humph! A little mental pap before they run on to lunch."

The cackle and babble ceased suddenly as the chairman and lecturer appeared. After a few announcements, the leading man was introduced. Bambi was right. It was the man. You felt personality in the slow way he swept the audience with his eyes, in the charming, friendly smile, in the humour of his face. The women fairly purred.

Jarvis grunted impatiently, and Bambi felt a sense of guilt for her ready response to this man, who had not yet spoken. Then he began, in a good, resonant voice, to hook this lecture to the one of the week before.

"Oh, it's a course," Bambi whispered.

Jarvis nodded. He wished he was well out of it. He hated the woman-idol kind of lecturer. Then a stray phrase caught his wandering attention, and he began to listen. The man had the "gift of tongues." That was evident. This was his last conscious comment. It seemed but a few minutes later that he turned to Bambi, as the lecturer sat down. She sat forward in her chair, with that absorbed responsiveness he had marked in her before. He touched her before she realized that it was time to go.

"That was big, wasn't it?" she said.

"It was. He is somebody. He gave them real meat instead of pap."

"And they liked it," Bambi said, reaching for her furs, her bag, and her umbrella, strewn under the seat in her trance.

"That fellow is all right. He makes you feel that there are fine, big things to be done in the world, and that you must be about it — not to-morrow, but to-day," Jarvis said, as they pushed their way out.

"I wonder what these women are doing about it?" Bambi speculated.

"Talking."

"Boo!" she scoffed at him.

They strolled, with the strollers, on the avenue. They ate what Jarvis dubbed "a soupçon" of lunch in a tea-shop, and to elude a dribble of rain they betook themselves to the Armory, down on Seventeenth Street, to the much-talked-of International Modern Art Exhibition.

Adam and Eve, the first day in the Garden, could not have been any more dazed than these two young things who had strayed in out of the rain. No sated sensibilities here, prodded by the constant shocks

of metropolitan "latest thing," but fresh, enthusiastic interest was their priceless possession. They wandered aimlessly through several rooms, until they emerged into the Cubist and Futurist sections and stood rooted to the floor with surprise and horror.

"What are these?" Bambi demanded.

"Damaged Goods," Jarvis laughed, with a rare attempt at a joke.

"Are they serious?"

"Tragic, I should say."

He looked about with an expression of amusement, but Bambi felt actual, physical nausea at the sight of the vivid blue and orange and purple.

"It's wicked!" she said, between closed teeth.

"Let's sit down and try to get the idea," said Jarvis.

"There isn't any idea."

"Oh, yes, there must be. The directors would never get together an acre of these atrocities unless there was some excuse."

"It's low and degenerate. It's a school of hideousness. Come away!"

"You go sit in another room if you like. I am going to give these fellows a fair chance. Maybe they've got hold of something new."

"There is nothing new about that awful woman with a decayed face. She has been dead for weeks."

"Just put your emotions away, Bambi, and train your mind on this thing. Here is a whole school of men, working in a new medium, along new ideas. They can't all be crazy, you know."

"You like it?"

"Of course I don't like it, but it interests me. I haven't read or heard anything about it, so it is a shock."

"You shall not make for yourselves false images," she said, shaking her head.

"Maybe these maniacs are trying to break up the conventions of Painting and Sculpture. They want more freedom."

"They are anarchists, vandals!"

"Possibly, but if they are necessary to the development of a bigger art expression —— "

"They ought to work in secret, and exhibit in the dark."

"No, no! We have to be prepared for it. Our old standards have got to go."

"I feel as medieval as the Professor. I never really understood him before."

"We ought to bring him here."

"I think it would kill him," Bambi answered.

They spent a couple of hours, and then went back to the club. For some reason the Cubists had stirred Jarvis deeply. He divined something new and sincere, where Bambi felt only pose and degeneracy.

"When you think of that awful street, and 'Damaged Goods,' and that exhibit of horrors, all in two days, I don't wonder I feel like an old, old woman," she said.

"Suppose we stay in to-night? There is some kind of special meeting announced here, to discuss the drama. We might go in for a little while."

"All right. But 'early to bed,' for to-morrow we set out on our careers."

"You haven't told me what yours is, yet," he objected.

"Mine is a secret."

The dining-room of the club was entirely full when they went down, and the hum of talk and laughter roused Bambi's tired sensibilities.

"It's quite jolly," she said. "Some of the people look interesting, don't they?"

"I talked to that little man, over there, with the red necktie, while I was waiting for you, and he has ideas."

"Lovely woman with him."

They chatted personalities for a while.

"Seems ages since we left home, doesn't it?"

"Yes. Big mental experiences obliterate time."

"The Professor has forgotten to write, of course."

"He has probably forgotten us."

"Oh, no!"

"I feel that I am getting rather well acquainted with you," he nodded and smiled.

"How do you like me, now that you have met me?" she teased.

"You are an interesting specimen oversensitized."

"Jarvis!" she protested. "I sound like a Cubist picture."

After dinner they drifted with the crowd into the art gallery, where they talked to several people who introduced themselves. It was very friendly and social. The lecturer they had heard in the morning was there. Jarvis went to speak to him, and brought him back to Bambi. She found him jolly and responsive. She even dared to twit him about his feminine audience.

People seated themselves in groups, and finally a chairman made some remarks about the Modern Drama and invited a discussion. A dramatic critic made cynical comment on the so-called "uplift

plays," which roused Jarvis to indignation. To Bambi's surprise, he was on his feet instantly, and a torrent of words was spilled upon the dramatic critic. He held the attention closely, in an impassioned plea for thoughtful drama, not necessarily didactic, but the serious handling of vital problems in comedy, if necessary, or even in farce. It need not be such harrowing work as Brieux makes it, but if the man who had things to say could and would conquer the technique of dramatic writing, he would reach the biggest audiences that could be provided, which ought to pay him for the severity of his apprenticeship.

Bambi thrilled with pride in him, his handsome face, his passionate idealism, and his eloquence. He sat down, amid much applause, and Bambi knew he had made his place among these clever people. He took some part in the discussion that followed, and when they went upstairs she marked the flush of excitement and the alive look of his face.

"I was proud of you, Jarvis," she said, as they stopped at her door.

"Nonsense. The man I talked against was a duffer, but this has been a great day," he said. "This place stimulates you every minute."

"To-morrow we move on Broadway, Captain Jocelyn. Get your forces in order to advance."

"Very good, General. Good night, sir."

"Good night."

As she closed her door she skipped across the room. She knew the first gun had been fired when Jarvis rose to speak. If she was to act as commander in the making of his career, she was glad she had a personality to work with. Nobody would forget that Greek head, with its close-cropped brown curls, those dreaming blue eyes, and that sensitive, over-controlled mouth. Her own dreams were wrought about them.

VII

THE day which Bambi foretold would some time be famous in history dawned propitiously, with sun and soft airs. A sense of excitement got them up early. Breakfast was over, and Jarvis ready for action, by eight-thirty.

"I don't believe Mr. Belasco will be down this early, Jarvis," Bambi said.

"Well, he is a busy man. He'll probably get an early start. I want to be on the ground when he arrives, anyhow. If he should want me to read the play this morning, we should need time."

She made no more objections. She straightened his tie, and brushed his coat, with shining eyes, full of excitement.

"Just think! In five hours we may know." He took up his hat and his manuscript.

"Yes," he answered confidently. "Shall we lunch here?"

"Yes, and do hurry back, Jarvis."

At the door he remembered her.

"Where are you going? Do you want to come?"

"No. I have something to attend to myself. Good luck."

She held out her hand to him. He held it a second, looking at it as if it was a specimen of something hitherto unknown.

"I am not forgetting that you are giving me this chance," he said, and left abruptly.

Bambi leaped about the rooms in a series of joy-leaps that would have shamed Mordkin, before she began the serious business of the day.

Jarvis had carefully looked up the exact location of the Belasco Theatre. He decided to walk uptown, in order to arrange his thoughts, and to make up his mind just how much and what he would say to Mr. Belasco. The stir, the people, the noise and the roar were unseen, unheard. He strolled along, towering above the crowd, a blond young Achilles, with many an admiring eye turned in his wake.

None of the perquisites of success, so dear to Bambi's dreams, appealed to him. He saw himself, like John the Baptist, crying in the wilderness, which was the world, and all the people, in all the cities, were roused out of their lethargy and dull submission at his call — not to prayer, but to thought. It was

a great mission he was upon, and even Broadway became consecrated ground. He walked far beyond the cross street of the theatre in his absorption, so it was exactly half-after nine when he arrived at the box office.

"I want to speak to Mr. Belasco," he said to the man there.

"Three flights up."

"Is there an elevator?"

"Naw."

He resented the man's grin, but he made no reply. He began to climb the long flights of dark stairs. Arrived at the top, the doors were all locked, so he was forced to descend again to the box office.

"There is nobody up there," he said.

"You didn't expect anybody to be there at this hour of the dawn, did you?"

"What time does Mr. Belasco usually come?"

"There is nothing usual about him. He is liable to land here any time between now and midnight, if he comes at all."

"He doesn't come every day, then?"

The man grinned.

"Say, you're new to this game, ain't you? Some-

times he don't show up for days. The steno can tell you whether he is coming to-day."

"The steno?"

"Yes. The skirt that's in his office."

"When does she come?"

"Oh, about ten or eleven."

"Thank you."

"Don't mention it."

Jarvis made the ascent again. He stood about for nearly an hour before the office girl arrived. "Those stairs is the limit," she gasped. "You waiting for me?"

"I am waiting for Mr. Belasco."

"Oh! Appointment?"

"No."

"Got a letter to him?"

"No."

"What do you want to see him about? A job?"

"No. About a play."

She ushered him in, opened the windows, took off her hat, looked at herself in the mirror, while she patted her wonderful hair. She powdered her nose, fixed her neck ruffle, apparently oblivious of Jarvis.

"What time do you expect Mr. Belasco?"

"Goodness only knows."

"Do you think he will come to-day?"

"Far be it from me to say."

"But I wish to see him."

"Many a blond has twirled his thumbs around here for weeks for the same reason."

"But I am only in New York for a little while."

"I should worry," said she, opening her typewriter desk. "Give me your play. I'll see that it gets to him."

"I'd rather talk to him myself."

"Suit yourself."

"I suppose I can wait here?"

"No charge for chairs," said the cheerful one.

An hour passed, broken only by the click of the typewriter. Conventional overtures from the cheerful one being discouraged, she smashed the keys in sulky silence. From eleven to twelve things were considerably enlivened. Many sleek youths, of a type he had seen on Broadway, arrived. They saluted the cheerful one gayly as "Sally" and indulged in varying degrees of witty persiflage before the inevitable "The Governor in?"

"Nope."

"Expect him to-day?"

"I dunno."

"Billy here?"

"Dunno."

"Thank you, little one."

Sometimes they departed, sometimes they joined Jarvis's waiting party. Lovely ladies, and some not so lovely. Old and young, fat and thin, they climbed the many stairs and met their disappointment cheerfully. They usually fell upon Jack, or Billy, or Jim, of the waiters, who, in turn, fell upon Belle, or Susan, or Fay.

"What are you with? How's business?" were always the first questions, followed by shop talk, unintelligible to Jarvis. One youth said that he had been to this office ten successive mornings without getting an appointment. The others laughed, and one woman boasted that she had the record, for she had gone twenty-eight times before she saw Frohman, the last engagement she sought.

"But he engaged me the 29th," she laughed.

They impressed Jarvis as the lightest-hearted set he had ever encountered. They laughed over everything and nothing. By one o'clock Jarvis and the cheerful one were again in sole possession.

"Don't you ever eat?" she asked him.

"Oh, is it lunch time?" he inquired.

"Come out of the trance."

She went through the entire performance before the mirror, in putting on her hat.

"Shall I bring you anything, dearie?" she asked him, as she completed her toilette.

"I'm going, too," he said. "I'll be back."

He plunged down the stairs. When he reached the street he thought of Bambi's face when he returned with the announcement of his futile morning. He went into a shop, telephoned the club that he had been detained and would not be back to lunch. Then he foraged for food and went back to his sitting on the top floor of the Belasco.

"Well, little stranger," said the cheerful one, on her return.

His interest in the afternoon callers waned. At five o'clock he gave it up. He arranged with his new friend to call her up in the morning to see if she had any news from the front. Then he slowly turned his footsteps toward the club. He was irritated at the long delay, and for the first time aware that there might be more difficulty in seeing managers than he had anticipated. He had thought the condescension all on his part, but eight hours of airing his heels in the outer purlieus had altered his viewpoint a trifle.

His main concern was Bambi's disappointment. She had sent him out with such high hopes — she would receive him back with his Big Chief feathers drooping. He was sorrier than he would admit to drown the shine in her eyes. He walked downtown to postpone the evil hour, but in the end it had to be faced.

VIII

AFTER Jarvis had departed on his conquering way Bambi turned her attention to herself. She made a most careful toilette. When she was hatted, and veiled, and gloved, she tripped up and down before her mirror, trying herself out, as it were. She made several entrances into editorial sanctums. Once she entered haltingly, drawn to her full five-feet-one; once she bounced in, confidently, but she vetoed that, and decided upon a dignified but cordial entrance. One more trip to the mirror for a close inspection.

"Oh, you pretty thing!" she nodded to herself.

She set forth, as Jarvis had done, with the address on the publisher's letter clasped in her hand. She marched uptown with a singing heart. She saw everything and everybody. She wondered how many of them carried happy secrets, like hers, in their thoughts — how many of them were going toward thrilling experiences. She shot her imagination, like a boomerang, at every passing face, in

the hope of getting back secrets that lay behind the masks. She was unaware how her direct gaze riveted attention to her own eager face. She thought the people who smiled at her were friendly, and she tossed them back as good as they gave. Even when a waxed and fashionable old dandy remarked, "Good morning, my dear," she only laughed. Naturally, he misunderstood, and fell in step beside her.

"Are you alone?" he asked, coyly.

She gave him a direct glance and answered seriously.

"No. I am walking with my five little brothers and sisters." He looked at her in such utter amazement that she laughed again. This time he understood.

"Good day," said he, and right-about-faced.

She knew she had plenty of time, so she sauntered into a bookshop and turned over the new books, thinking that maybe some day she would come into such a shop and ask for her own books, or Jarvis's published plays. She chatted with a clerk for a few minutes, then went back to the avenue, like a needle to a magnet.

In and out of shops she went. She looked at

hats and frocks, and touched with envious fingers soft stuffs and laces.

"Some day," she hummed, "some day!"

She even turned in at Tiffany's seductive door. Colour was a madness with her, and her little cries of delight over a sapphire encouraged a young clerk to take it out of the case and lay it on the velvet square.

"Oh, it's so beautiful it hurts!" Bambi exclaimed.

He smiled at her sympathetically.

"Magnificent, isn't it? Are you interested in jewels?" he added.

"I am interested, but I am not a buyer," she admitted to him. "I adore colour."

"Let me show you some things," he said.

"Oh, no. I mustn't take up your time."

"That's all right. I have nothing else to do just now."

So he laid before her enraptured gaze the wealth of the Indies — the treasure baubles of a hundred queens — blue and green, and red and yellow, they gleamed at her. In an instinctive gesture she put out her hand, then drew it back quickly.

"Mustn't touch?" she asked, so like a child that he laughed.

"Take it up if you like."

She took the superb emerald. "Do you suppose it knows how beautiful it is?"

"It takes a fine colour on your hand. Some people kill stones, you know. You ought to wear them."

He told her some of the history of the jewels he showed her. He explained how stones were judged. He described the precautions necessary when famous jewels were to be taken from one place to another. Bambi sat hypnotized, and listened. She might have spent the entire day there if the man had not been called by an important customer. "I have been here hours, haven't I? I feel as if I ought to buy something. Could you show me something about $1.55?" The man laughed so spontaneously and Bambi joined him so gayly, that they felt most friendly.

"Come in next week. I'll show you a most gorgeous string of pearls which is coming to be restrung," he said.

"Oh, thank you. I have had such a good time."

He took her to the door as if she were a Vanderbilt, and bowed her out. The carriage man bowed, too, and Bambi felt that she was getting on.

This time she loitered no longer. She inspected

her address for the hundredth time, and went to the magazine office, where she was to find the golden egg. She was impressed by the elegance of the busy reception room, with its mahogany and good pictures. She sent her card to the editor and waited fifteen minutes, then the card bearer returned. She was sorry, but the editor was extremely occupied this morning. Was there anything she could do for Mrs. Jocelyn? Bambi's face registered her disappointment.

"Would it do any good for me to wait?"

"Have you a letter of introduction? Mr. Strong seemed not to know your name."

"He told me to come."

"Told you? How do you mean?"

Bambi offered the letter to her. As she read it her face changed.

"Oh, are you the girl who won the prize?" Bambi nodded.

"You are?" she protested her amazement.

"I'm just as surprised as you are," Bambi assured her.

"Of course Mr. Strong will see you. He didn't understand." She was off in great haste, and back in a jiffy.

"Come right in," she invited.

Bambi wanted to run. Her breath came in little, short gasps. She wished she could take hold of the other girl's hand and hold on tight. A door stood open into an outside office, and several clerks stared at her. The sanctum door was open.

"Mr. Strong, this is Mrs. Jocelyn," said her guide, and the door closed behind her. A tall, pleasant-faced young man rose and tried to cover his surprise.

"How do you do?" he said cordially, with outstretched hand.

Bambi laid hers in it.

"I'm frightened to death," she answered.

"Frightened — of me?"

"Well, not you, exactly, but editorism." He laughed.

"I can match amazement with your terror, then. You are a surprise."

"You are disappointed in me," she said quickly.

"I expected a — a — well, a bigger woman, and older."

"I see. You didn't expect a half portion?"

"Exactly," he smiled. "Well, we were extremely interested in your story."

"I am so glad."

"What else have you done?"

"Nothing."

"That your first story?"

"Yes."

"How did you happen to write it, Mrs. Jocelyn?"

"I am looking for a career," she began, but his surprised glance stopped her. "You see I ought to dance. That's what the Lord intended me to do. I can dance."

"I can imagine that."

"But dancing would take me away from home so much, and the 'Heavenly Twins' need me so."

"Twins? You haven't twins!"

"Yes. Oh, no, not real ones, but my father and Jarvis."

"Jarvis?"

"Jarvis is a poet and a dreamer."

"Is Jarvis a friend?"

"Oh, no, I am married to him. They are both so helpless. My father is a mathematician. I have to take care of them both, you see."

"You mean in a financial way?"

"My father makes a fair income, and of course Jarvis may sell his plays, but when I married him I expected to support him."

"He is delicate, I suppose?"

She laughed.

"He's six feet and over, wide and strong as a battleship."

"And he expects you to support him?"

"No. He protests, but you see I took a sort of advantage of him when I married him. He didn't want to marry me."

"You are a most extraordinary young woman," remarked Mr. Strong.

"Oh, no, I am usual enough. I help Jarvis with his plays, and what I say seems to have sense. Do you know?"

"I do."

"So just for fun I wrote the story, and just for fun I sent it to your contest."

"Well, just for fun we gave you the prize."

She laughed.

"We want a whole series of tales about that girl. She's new."

"How many is a series?"

"Oh, eight or ten, if you have material enough."

"Oh, yes, I live — I mean I get material all the time."

"What do you want for them?"

"Oh, I'd like a lot for them. New York is full of things I want."

He laughed again.

"We could give you $150 a story. That would be $1,500 for the ten. Then, eventually, we would make a book of them, and you would get 10 per cent. on that."

"A book? A book, with illustrations, and covers, and all?"

He nodded. "Are those terms satisfactory?"

"Oh, mercy, yes. It sounds like a fortune!"

"When could you begin, Mrs. Jocelyn?"

"Right away, to-day!"

"Well, that will hardly be necessary. If you send copy to us by the fifth, that will be soon enough."

"All right. Jarvis is selling a play to-day, so probably we will be rich shortly."

"To whom is Mr. Jocelyn selling his play?"

"Belasco."

"So! That's fine! You'll never have to support him, at that rate."

"He doesn't know about my getting the prize and coming to see you, and all. I want to keep it a secret for a time."

"I understand."

"It would be rather awful for me to be famous first."

"I don't know about that. It would be selfish of your husband to stand in your way."

"Oh, Jarvis is selfish. He's utterly, absorbedly selfish, but not just that way. He'd never stand in my way."

"I'd like to meet Jarvis."

"Well, when the secret is out I'll bring him here. He's unusual, Jarvis is. Some day he'll be great."

"He is in luck to be Mr. to your Mrs."

She flushed furiously.

"Yes, I think he is," she admitted, as she rose.

"How long are you to be in New York?"

"As long as your five hundred holds out."

"You must come in again. If I can be of any use to you, while you are here, give you letters to anybody, have you meet people, I'll be delighted to do so."

"You're a very nice man," said she. "You have removed the ban from the whole tribe of editors in twenty minutes' talk."

"That's a tribute worth living for. It has been a delightful twenty minutes. Come in again."

Out in the office, and in the impressive reception

room, interested faces turned toward her. The girl who had acted sponsor for her nodded. She tasted the first fruits of success, and they were sweet. The only imperfection was the fact she could not tell Jarvis. She could not brag of her triumphs nor repeat the friendly chat with Mr. Strong. It would be such fun to see his surprise at the news — he had so lately patronized her. "You are not the stuff of which creative artists are made, of course."

Tra-la-la! She'd make him eat those words.

Then she began at once to do the next story of the series, and by the time she reached the club she had it all thought out. It was then that Jarvis's telephone message came to her, and she decided that he was even now reading his play aloud to Belasco; that he, too, had found a golden key.

She worked on the new story all the afternoon, and waited for Jarvis's triumphant return, in a seventh heaven of joyous anticipation.

IX

JARVIS marshalled his reluctant feet into "Forward, March!" down the hall, and trod softly in the hope that he could get past Bambi's door; but at his first step on the corridor it was flung open, and the small figure silhouetted against the light of the room behind.

"You read him the play?"

He led her gently into the room, closed the door, and faced her.

"Jarvis, he refused it?" she cried.

"I have spent seven hours sitting in an anteroom with a blond steno, waiting. Nobody has been near, all day, excepting fat old girls and Billy boys, looking for jobs."

"Belasco didn't come?"

"He did not. What's more, he sometimes does not come for days."

"Couldn't they send him word you were there?"

Even Jarvis smiled at this.

"My dear, they treated me with the same consid-

eration afforded the janitor. It occurred to me, during those seven hours of enforced thought, that our ideas of the simplicity of selling a play were a trifle arrogant. It seems to have unforeseen complications."

Bambi sat down on the bed, her brow knitted.

"Seven hours sitting? That's awful!"

"The blond young woman suggested a letter of introduction or an appointment, but I don't know any one to give me a letter. I doubt if he will give me the appointment without it."

"I can get it for you!" she said.

"You can? Where? How?"

"I know a way. Never you mind."

"I was afraid you would be so disappointed I was tempted not to come back at all," he remarked.

"Disappointed? Not I! Why, we can wait seven years, if need be. In the end we will win."

"You are a very good sport, Miss Mite."

"I are," laughed she. "I am a very able woman, Jarvis. Some day you will be proud of me."

"You are a terrible egotist," he objected.

"If I didn't believe in myself, where would I be? You and father scarcely notice me."

"I'm beginning to notice you," Jarvis interrupted.

"I was really surprised to find how concerned I was not to disappoint you."

"That was nice of you, Jarvis," she beamed at him.

"Don't do that," he said sharply.

"Do what?"

"Smile like a cat at a mouse," he said.

"I intended that for a grateful smile."

"It didn't turn out that. It was possessive. If I can't be friendly with you without your over-occupying my thoughts, I shall ignore you."

"You mustn't worry about liking me, Jarvis. It's inevitable. People always like me. I become a necessity, like salt and pepper. Just accept me cheerfully, for here I am."

He looked at her, frowning.

"Yes, there you are."

"That scowl is very becoming to you. You look like an angry viking."

"I am in no good mood to play."

"Oh, very well, Grandfather Grunt. I had such a nice day. Why don't you ask me about it?"

"I should be interested to hear what you did."

"Your manners are painful but impeccable," she laughed. "Well, I flittered and fluttered up and down the avenue, like a distracted butterfly. I

spent a few hours in Tiffany's with such a pleasant man."

"Who was he?"

"I don't know. He was a clerk there. I went in to look at jewels."

"What for?"

"Just for the joy of it."

"And a clerk spent two hours with you?"

She nodded.

"But why?"

"Because I'm so charming, stupid. He asked me to come in next week to see some famous pearls. I also inspected a bookshop. I asked about the sale of published plays. I thought we might make your things into a book."

"If Broadway doesn't want them?"

"Better still if Broadway does."

"Do you always go about making acquaintances?" he inquired.

"Always. People like to talk to me. I look so inoffensive."

He smiled at her saucy, tip-tilted face.

"Any more adventures?"

"Oh, yes. A gay old man asked me if I was alone?"

"What?" he exploded.

"He did. He liked my looks enormously. I could see it."

"Did you call a policeman?"

"Not I. Do you think I am a 'bitty-lum'?"

"A what?" he asked.

"Once a pig molicepan,
Saw a bitty-lum,
Sitting on a surbcone,
Chewing gubber rum.
Hi, said the molicepan,
Will you sim me gome?
Tinny on your nintype,
Said the bitty-lum."

"How old *are* you?" inquired Jarvis.

"Well, I've got all my teeth."

"What did you do with the old masher?"

"I squelched him."

"Did he go away?"

She nodded.

"You must be more careful on the streets, Bambi. People misunderstand you."

"Well, I can always explain myself," she added, laughing.

"Then what did you do?"

"More or less directly, I came here, and lunched, in the conviction that you were closeted with Belasco. Did you have any lunch?"

"Yes. The blond one drove me out for half an hour."

"I should have gone with you."

"Why?"

"I would never sit anywhere seven hours."

"What would you have done?"

"Gone to Belasco's house, or telephoned something startling that would have brought him down quickly."

"For instance?"

"Well, that the theatre was on fire."

"But when he got there?"

"I'd have made him see it was a joke."

"Maybe he hasn't that kind of a sense of humour?"

"Then I should have perished bravely."

So the incidents of their first day's careering ended jocularly.

Bambi called Mr. Strong on the wire next day, and told him of Jarvis's unprofitable sitting. Could he get her a letter to Belasco? Or to any other leading manager? He laughed, said he did not know Belasco,

but thought he could arrange it for her. He promised to send a letter to the club.

With this assurance to fall back upon, she persuaded Jarvis to go to the office of one of the newer managers who seemed to be of an open mind in regard to untried playwrights. She showed him a magazine article about this "live wire," named over his productions, and repeated his cordial invitation to new writers.

Jarvis set forth reluctantly. He liked salesman work as little as he had expected to. But he felt he owed some effort to Bambi, since he was her guest, and her mind was so set on his success.

This time the cheeky-faced office boy admitted that the manager was in. He accepted and scrutinized Jarvis's card with disdain, but on his return from the inner office he ejaculated, "Wait!" So Jarvis sat down for his second endurance feat. The same Johnnies and Billies and Fays came to this office in their endless seeking. He began to vision the great, ceaseless army of them "making the rounds," as they call it, often hungry and tired. They were most of them uneducated, you could tell by their speech, for all their long "a's" and short "r's." That they were physically unadapted to the profession was obvious enough in many cases. They

were probably badly trained. How did they live? Where did they go? They began to haunt him.

He was interrupted by hearing his name called. He rose mechanically, and followed the boy into a very large and ornate office. A fat Jewish man, in loud clothes, a brown derby hat, and a cigar, sat at a desk, dictating.

"H'are ye?" he ejaculated as Jarvis entered. He went on dictating and smoking, until Jarvis finally interrupted him, saying he wanted to see the manager. The fat man glared at him.

"Sit down until I get through!" he shouted. "I'm the manager."

Jarvis took a chair and looked at the man closely. What would such a creature find in his play, with its roots in a modern condition, no more grasped by this man than by Professor Parkhurst? The absurdity of the idea struck Jarvis so forcibly that he laughed out loud.

"Let's have it, if it's any good," said the fat man.

"I beg your pardon," Jarvis replied.

The manager dismissed the stenographer, took up Jarvis's card, looked at it, and then at his victim.

"Jarvis Jocelyn," he read. "Good stage name. What's your line, Jarvis?"

"WELL, BELIEVE ME, THAT HIGH-BROW STUFF IS ON THE TOBOGGAN"

"I've come to see you about a play."

"Oh, you're a writer? What have you done?"

"Several plays, and some poetry."

"Nix on the poetry. Who brought out the plays?"

"Nobody yet. I am just beginning to offer them."

"What sort of stuff is it?"

"It's a dramatic handling of the feminist movement."

"What's that?"

"The emancipation of woman."

"I hadn't heard about it. Is your stuff funny?"

"No. It is a serious presentation of an unique revolution ——"

"Well, believe me, that high-brow stuff is on the toboggan. I knew it couldn't last. I gave it to them when they demanded it, but I am cutting it out now. Haven't you got a good melodrama, or a funny show?"

"I have not," superbly.

"Say, do you know any Jews? I got a great idea for a Jew play that would take like the measles if some fellow would work it up. Pile of money in it."

Jarvis rose, furious.

"It is so apparent that we have nothing to say to each other that I'll bid you good morning."

"If you fellows who come in here from the country to run Broadway could put *yourselves* in a show, it would be the scream of the town," said the fat man in Jarvis's wake.

"I'd rather starve than endure a pig like you!" cried Jarvis, as he fled.

The fat man's laugh followed him to the street. He hated himself, and the whole situation. It galled him to think he had deliberately submitted himself to such treatment. Even Bambi could not expect it of him, — to set him to sell his dreams in such a market. He charged down Broadway, clearing a wake as wide as a battleship in action. He saw red. He was unconscious of people. He only felt the animus of the atmosphere, the sense of things tugging at him, which had to be cast off. Why was he here? He wanted the quiet, the open stretches, and his own free thoughts. What turn of the wheel had brought him into this maelstrom? Bambi! The old story, Samson and Delilah! He had visioned great things. She had shorn him, and pushed him into a net of circumstances. He would not endure it. He would sweep her out of his life, and be about his work.

He was disappointed to find her out when he re-

turned to the club. He had his opening speech all ready and it was annoying to have his scene delayed. He raged about, to keep his wrath hot, until she came. "Greeting," she began; then saw his face, and added, "Jungle beast!"

"I'll not stay here another day!" he cried.

"You saw the manager?"

"He asked me if the stuff was funny! He invited me to write a Jew play, and make a pot of money! He said 'Nix on the high-brow stuff,' and never heard of the feminist movement," he blurted out in one breath.

She sat down under the onslaught, trying to arrange her rebellious features.

"'Nix on the high-brow stuff.' To me!" he repeated.

Bambi gave up. She rolled on the bed, and laughed.

Jarvis raged the room up and down. There was no gleam of humour in it for him. When her paroxysm had passed, she sat up and looked at him.

"Poor old Knight with the Broken Lance," she said. "It's tough, but it had to be done."

"What had to be done?"

"This morning's work. It was part of your train-

ing. You must know just what the situation is here, in the market-place."

"But there is no place for me here."

"After two days' failure, you give up?"

"I told you I couldn't sell my things. They are too good."

"That's rubbish. Nothing you, nor I, nor any other human can think, is too good. If we have big thoughts, and want to tell them to our brothers who speak another tongue, if we have the brains, we must learn their tongue, not hope for them to acquire ours. That is what I hoped you would see."

"You think I've got to learn the Broadway lingo?"

"I do. If you have anything to say, Broadway needs it."

"I can't translate what I want to say into that speech."

"But you can. It will mean hard work, hard work and heartache, and disappointment, but you can do it, because you have the soul stuff of a great man."

Her eyes shone now, misted with feeling. He saw again his multitudes flocking to him in the wilderness. He saw them aroused, revived, triumphant over life through him.

"Will you help me?" he cried to her. It was his first uttered need of her, and her heart beat high in response.

"I will, if you will let me, Jack o' Dreams."

"Don't let me give up! Don't let me lose heart!"

"No, I won't. I'll push, or haul you, to the top!"

"I came to scoff, and I stay to pray," said Jarvis, cryptically. "God bless you, Bambi!" he added, as he left her.

X

NO LETTER from Mr. Strong arrived in the morning's mail, so Bambi induced Jarvis to go over to the Cubist show, by himself, on the plea that she had a headache. He went, most willingly, anywhere, except Broadway.

The minute he was out of the way her languid, headachey manner changed to one of brisk energy. She donned her smartest frock and hat. She was more earnest in her effort to allure the eye than she was on the day of her own conquest. "You must look your best, you little old Bambi, you, and see what you can do for big Jarvis!"

After the last nod of approval at her reflected self, she tucked Jarvis's manuscript under her arm, and started forth. She had made a close study of all the theatrical columns of the papers and magazines since their arrival in New York, so she was beginning to have a formal bowing acquaintance with the names of the leading managers.

In spite of her cheerful acceptance of Jarvis's mood

of despair, the day before, she was really deeply touched by it, and appealed to by his helplessness to cope with the situation. She remembered her words to her father, "He cannot accommodate himself to the commercial standards of the times." It was so true. And was she right in submitting him to them so ruthlessly? Was she blunting something fine in him by this ugly picture she was holding up for him to see, of a thoroughly commercialized drama, the laws and restrictions of which he must know and conquer, or be silenced? All the mother in her hated to have him hurt, but the sensible helpmeet part of her knew that it must be done. Of course he could not be expected to know how to approach managers, all at once. He was probably very tactless. He admitted that he had called the enemy of yesterday a "pig." Naturally that was no way to help his cause. Perhaps, after this experience, and his new cognizance of conditions, it would be better for him to write in quiet and solitude, while she acted as salesman.

"I'm just plain adventuress enough to love the fight of it," she admitted to herself as she approached the office she had selected for her first try. She tripped in, confidently, and addressed the office boy.

"Mr. Claghorn in?" she asked.

"Nope."

"When do you expect him?"

"Oh, any time. He's in and out."

"I'll wait."

"Probably won't be back until after lunch."

A railing shut off the hall where she stood from the office proper, where the boy was on guard. Doors opened off this central room into the private offices. There were no chairs in this hall, and the boy made no move to open the railing.

"Is that large armchair in there rented for the day?" Bambi inquired.

"Not so far as I know," he grinned.

"Does this thing open, or do I have to jump it?" she smiled.

"Where are you goin'?"

"To the large armchair."

"Welcome to our city," said he, as he lifted the rail. "Nobody allowed in here except by appointment."

"That's all right. I understand that," she said nonchalantly, and sank into the haven of the chair.

All the details of the office, which bored Jarvis, or which he entirely failed to see, fascinated Bambi. She set herself to the subjection of the office boy, by a request for the baseball score.

"Say, are you a fan?" he asked.

"Can't you see it in my eye?"

He was launched. He gave her a minute biographical sketch of every player on the team, his past and future possibilities. He went over all the games of the past season, while Bambi turned an enraptured face upon him.

He was frequently interrupted by actors and actresses who came by appointment, or otherwise, and he gave her all the racy details concerning them at his disposal. By indirection she obtained a description of Claghorn, so that he might not escape her if he came in.

All the actors looked at her with interest, the actresses with disdain. One whispered to the boy, who shook his head.

"Say, what you wid?" he asked her later.

"I don't understand you."

His look became suspicious. "What show you with?"

"With 'Success,'" she answered hastily, patting the manuscript.

"Road show?"

"No."

"Playing New York?"

"Not yet."

"Gimme two pasteboards when you come to town. I'd like to see you."

"All right. What's your name?"

"Robert Mantell Moses. I'm going on, in comic opera, some day."

"So?" said Bambi.

"Song and dance. Are you a dancer?"

"I am."

"Toe or Tango?"

"I beg pardon."

"Toe dancer, or Tango artist?"

"Oh, I do them both."

"Do you do the Kitchen Sink? And the Wash Tub?"

Bambi thought fast. "Yes. And the One-legged Smelt. Also the Jabberwock Jig."

He inspected her suspiciously.

"Say, those are new ones on me."

"Really?"

She was thoroughly enjoying herself when the brazen-mouthed clock twanged twelve.

"Goodness! Is it as late as that? Glaghorn's ins are mostly outs."

"Give me that again."

"You said he was in and out."

"Nix on the rough stuff."

"What a lovely phrase! I must tell that to Jarvis."

"Who's Jarvis? Your steady?"

"No. He's a — relative by marriage."

"Nix on the 'in-laws' for me."

He suddenly straightened up to attention as a big, fierce-looking man plunged in, nearly demolished the railing in passage, and made for a door marked "Private."

"Any mail?" he shouted.

"No. Lady to see you, sir," the boy replied.

Bambi rose to meet the foe, who never glanced at her. He jerked open the door, but he was not quick enough for the originator of the Jabberwock Jig. Her small foot was slid into the space between the door and the threshold. It was at the risk of losing a valuable member, but she was so angry at being ignored that she never thought of it. When the gentleman found that the door would not close, he stuck his head out, and nearly kissed Bambi, whose smiling countenance happened to be in the way.

"Well?" he ejaculated.

"Quite well, thank you," she replied as she slid in the crack. He looked her over.

"Where did you come from?" he demanded.

"I was out there when you swept the horizon with your eye, but you must have missed me. I didn't run up a flag."

She was so little and so saucy that he had to smile.

"What do you want?" he asked directly.

"I want to talk with you, for about three minutes."

"I don't engage people for the shows."

"I don't want a job."

"Well, what do you want? Talk fast. My time is precious."

"I have here a very fine play, called 'Success,' which would be a good investment for you."

"Who wrote it?"

"My husband."

He glanced at her.

"I thought child marriage was prohibited in this state."

She dimpled back at him, deliciously.

"It is modern, dramatic."

"Comedy?"

"No."

"Nothing else has much chance. Leave it, and I will read it."

"When?"

"TELL YOUR HUSBAND TO PUT YOU IN A PLAY, AND I'LL PUT IT ON." "MUCH OBLIGED, I'LL TELL HIM. GOOD MORNING"

"As soon as I can."

"But we have to go home next Thursday."

"You don't expect me to read it before then?"

"Couldn't you?"

"I wouldn't read Pinero's latest before then."

"How soon would you read it?"

"I've got nine productions to look after. I only read on trains. I'm going to Buffalo to-night."

"Then you could take it along to-night?" she cried happily.

"Say, who let you in here, anyhow?"

"You did."

"I've got no time to talk to anybody."

"I'm not anybody. I'm I. Just promise me you'll read it to-night and I'll go."

"Is this it? Name and address on it?"

She nodded.

"All right. To-night. Now get out!"

"Thanks. I've had such a nice call." As she reached the door he spoke.

"Tell your husband to put you in a play and I'll put it on."

"Much obliged. I'll tell him. Good morning."

She made her farewells to Robert Mantell Moses, went out and down the street. It was definitely set-

tled in her mind that she was to market Jarvis's wares. She had a gift for it, a desperate courage in a crisis, that made her do anything to win her point and get what she came for. Jarvis would, no doubt, be sitting, still. He was waiting for her at the club.

"I was getting anxious about you. Did you go to a doctor?"

"Doctor?"

"For your head?"

"Oh, my head. I'd forgotten all about it. After you left, I felt so much better that I decided to go out."

"Looking for more adventures?"

"I never look for them. They — flock to my standard. No, I took the play and stormed a manager's office. I saw him, in spite of himself, and got him to promise to read the play to-night on the way to Buffalo."

"Who was he?"

"Claghorn."

"How did you get to him?"

"He ran through the big office into his private one, and was just about to pull up the drawbridge, when I sprang in after him."

"Just tell it to me in plain English, Bambi."

She described her entrance, with the subjection of the office boy, the ruse by which she got into the inner office, her interview with Claghorn, and his subsequent promise.

"You are a wonder!" he exclaimed. "I never could have thought of it."

"I should say you wouldn't. You'd have been sitting there yet."

"Did you tell him about the play?"

"In three minutes? I should say not! I had to cram my words in, like loading a rapid-fire gun. Pouf! Pouf! And out!"

"Did he seem intelligent?"

"Yes, rather. I have decided to see managers after this, Jarvis. It will be Jocelyn & Co. You do the work and I'll sell it. It's fun."

"It's wonderful how the gods look after me," he said.

"Gods nothing! It's wonderful how I look after you. You can burn incense to me."

"I do."

The play came back shortly, with a brief note from Claghorn. It had some good points, but it was too serious. Not dramatic enough. The third act was weak.

"All the silly asses want me to make them laugh," raged Jarvis.

"I am disappointed in my new friend, but the letter to Belasco is here now, so we'll have a talk with him. Will you go, or shall I?"

"I think I'd like to talk with him, and tell him my views," Jarvis said.

They sent in the letter, with a request for an interview. In the course of a few days a reply came saying that Mr. Belasco had gone West to see a new production, but if Mr. Jocelyn would send his play to the office it would receive the earliest possible attention. It was a blow to their hopes, but there was nothing else to do, so they dispatched it by messenger.

"I think, maybe, we had better plan to go back home to-morrow, and wait the decision there. The money is vanishing, and I am getting anxious about the Professor. He forgets to write anything of importance."

"All right. I'll be glad to go back."

"Let's go shop this afternoon, and take the morning train to-morrow."

"Good. Suits me."

"What shall I take the Professor? I've thought and thought. He's so hard to shop for."

"Get him an adding machine!"

Bambi withered him.

"He would disinherit me on the spot. That's like sending Paderewski a pianola."

"We must get something for Ardelia, too."

"I got her a red dress, a red hat, a salmon-pink waist, and handkerchiefs with a coloured border."

Once their thoughts turned toward the little house, and the arithmetical garden, they were anxious to get back. Their shopping tour was a gay affair, because it was their last outing.

"Don't you feel differently about New York?" she asked him as they walked back. "It seems to me like a fascinating new friend I have made. I am sorry to leave it."

"I'm not. I'm not made for cities. People interest me for a while, then I forget them, and they are always under foot, in places like this. I trip over them, and they interrupt my thoughts."

"I'm so glad you are true to type," she smiled up at him.

"I'm deeply grateful and appreciative of your bringing me here," he added awkwardly.

"That was out of character, Jarvis. A month ago you would have taken it as your right."

"I'm beginning to realize that others may have rights, that even you may have some, Miss Mite."

"Never fear. I'll protect mine," she boasted.

On the morrow they turned their faces toward home and the Professor.

XI

"IT LOOKS very out-of-the-worldly, doesn't it?" Bambi said as they came in sight of home.

"It looks like Paradise to me," sighed Jarvis, holding open the gate for her.

"Enter Eve, dragging the serpent," she laughed as she passed in. "Eve never played in an arithmetical garden," she added. "If she had, there would probably have been no immortal fall."

"The number eights look tired," Jarvis commented, ignoring her witticism.

She spied the Professor afar sitting at work on the piazza. She flew along the path and burst in upon him.

"Daddy!" she cried, and enveloped him. His astonishment was poignant.

"My dear," he said, "my dear. Why, I must have forgotten that you were coming. I would have been at the station."

"I knew you'd forget, so I didn't bother you with it. How are you? Have you been lonesome? Did

you miss us? Where's Ardelia?" all in a breath. The Professor smiled.

"Question one, I am well. Two, I cannot say that I have been lonesome. Three, I did not miss you. Four, Ardelia is in the kitchen. How are you, Jarvis?" he added as his son-in-law appeared.

"I am well, sir. I trust you are the same."

"Thank you. I enjoy good health."

"Stop it! Sounds like the first aid to manners. Here's Ardelia. Well, how do you do?"

Ardelia's face was decorated with a most expansive grin.

"Howdy, Miss Bambi? Howdy, Massa Jarvis? I sho'r am glad to see you folks home again." She shook hands with both of them.

"How's everything, Ardelia?"

"All right, Miss. Eberything is all right. We got 'long fine together, the Perfessor and me. We des went about forgettin' eberyting and habin' a mighty comfortable time. Did you all have a good time on your honeymoon?"

"Fine," said Bambi. "We brought you some presents, that will make your eyes ache, and, 'Delia, we're famished."

"Dog's foot! Heah I stan' a-gassin' and a-talkin'

and you all hungry as wolfscs." She hurried off, muttering.

Jarvis and Bambi sat down.

"Isn't there something you want to tell me? I can't just remember what you went to New York for?"

"We went to sell my play," Jarvis prompted.

"To be surc. It had escaped me for a moment. Were you successful?"

"We were not."

"Oh, Jarvis, how can you say that? We don't know yet. Belasco is considering it."

"What is this Belasco?"

Bambi looked at Jarvis, and they both laughed.

"Isn't he refreshing?" she remarked. "I've thought for two weeks in terms of managers. They fill the universe. They are the gods. Their nod is life or death, and now my nearest relative says, 'What is Belasco?'"

"It's a sort of meat sauce, isn't it?"

Consternation on both their faces, then an outburst from Bambi.

"No, no! That's tabasco, you dear, blessed innocent."

"Belasco is one of the leading managers in New York, Professor," explained Jarvis, patiently. "He

is as well known as Pierpont Morgan or Theodore Roosevelt."

"Indeed! Well, I am not surprised at my ignorance. I have no interest in present-day drama. It is degenerate mush."

"Have you seen anything, since 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'?" Jarvis inquired.

"I have seen 'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,'" he replied conclusively.

"That was considered strong meat in its day, but now we have 'Damaged Goods,'" mused Jarvis.

"And what are 'Damaged Goods'?" inquired the Professor.

"What are Yonkers? Don't tell him, Jarvis — he's too young to know. It's an ugly modern play. We saw some things you might have enjoyed. Oh, I often wished for you."

"Thank you, my dear, but I have no desire to enter that cauldron of humanity."

"I agree with you, Professor Parkhurst."

"That is a rare occurrence, I may say," answered the Professor, with a twinkle.

"Thank goodness, you have me to prod you into life. You would both sit in your dens and figure and write until you blinked like owls in the night. I have

stored up energy enough, from these two weeks in the cauldron, to run me for months. I didn't miss one thing, ugly or beautiful. I shall use it all."

"Use it? How use it, my dear?"

"In my thoughts, my opinions, my life."

"Dear me!" said her father, staring at her. "What odd things you say!"

"It's true, what she says," Jarvis ejaculated. "She rolled New York up on reels, like a moving-picture show, and I have no doubt she could give us a very good performance."

"I shall," quoth Bambi.

"It is rather a pity you waste your impressions, Bambi. Why don't you write them down?" Jarvis patronized.

"In a young lady's diary, I suppose. No, thanks."

"One author in a family is enough," commented the Professor, heartily.

"You ought to tell us your conclusion about your career. Did you settle it in your mind?"

"I did."

"A career?" anxiously, from Professor Parkhurst.

"Yes, wealth and fame are in my grasp."

"You haven't done anything rash, my dear?"

"Well, slightly rash, but not the rashest I could do."

"Is it dancing?" from Jarvis.

"Of a sort."

"Not public dancing?"

"No, private," she giggled.

"Will it take you away much?" Jarvis asked her.

"Oh, I'll go to New York occasionally."

"It is to be a secret, I take it?" the Professor said.

"It is, old Sherlock Holmes."

They slipped back into their routine of life as if it had never been broken. Jarvis, after two perturbed days of restlessness, went into a work fit over a new play. The Professor was busy with final examinations, so Bambi was left alone with plenty of leisure in which to do her next story.

She wisely decided to write herself — in other words, to dramatize her own experiences, to draw on her emotions, her own views of life. She must leave it to Jarvis to rouse and stir people. She would be content to amuse and charm them. So she boldly called her tale by her own name, "Francesca," and she shamelessly introduced the Professor and Jarvis, with a thin disguise, and chortled over their true likeness after she had dipped them in the solution of her imagination. She relied on the fact that neither of them ever looked between the covers of a

HER TALE HAD THE PLACE OF HONOUR AND WAS ILLUSTRATED BY
JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG, THE SUPREME DESIRE
OF EVERY YOUNG WRITER

magazine. Besides, even if they chanced upon the story, they would never recognize their own portraits.

A few days before the prize story was published, a special copy came to her from Mr. Strong. She hid it until the "Twins" were gone. Then she hurried out to the piazza and the hammock with it. It was a thrilling moment. "Prize Story by a Wonderful New Writer" stared up at her from the front page. Her tale had the place of honour in the makeup, and it was illustrated — double-page illustrations — by James Montgomery Flagg, the supreme desire of every young writer. She hugged the magazine. She scanned it over and over. She laid it on the table, picked it up casually, and turned to the first story indifferently, just to squeeze the full joy out of it. Then she pounded a pile of pillows into shape, drew her feet up under her, and began to read her own work. She smiled a good deal, she chuckled, finally she laughed outright, hugging herself. At this unfortunate moment Jarvis appeared. She looked as guilty as a detected criminal.

"What's the joke?"

"Oh, I was laughing at a story in here."

"How can you read that trash?"

"It isn't trash. It's perfectly delightful."

"What is it?" He came nearer to her, and she clutched the magazine tightly.

"Oh, just a prize story."

"A prize story? And funny enough to make you laugh? Not O. Henry?"

"Of course not. He's dead. A new writer, it says."

He held out his hands for it, and, perforce, she resigned it to him.

"Francesca!" he exclaimed.

"Odd, isn't it? That's what attracted me to it," Bambi lied.

"Well, I suppose there are other Francescas. I came to ask you to listen to a scenario."

"Good! I shall be delighted," she replied cordially, folding the magazine over her finger.

So the fatal moment came and passed. Her secret was safe. She kept the cherished magazine in her own room, read and reread it, patting its cover, as one would a curly head.

Upon the receipt of her second story came a telegram from Strong, "Can you see me on Thursday? New plan for stories. Arrive in Sunnyside ten in the morning." She wired him to come, then sat down

to work up an explanation of him for the "Heavenly Twins." He would be there for lunch — he must be accounted for. She discarded several plans, and finally decided to introduce him as the brother of a college classmate, in town for the day. She would get rid of the family speedily, so that she and Mr. Strong might have time for the conference. What on earth did he want to see her about? It must be important, to bring him from New York. Maybe he was disappointed with the second story, and wanted to break the contract. It was his kind way to come and say it, instead of writing it, but it was a blow. She had felt that the second tale was so much better than the first. She went over it, in her mind, trying to pick flaws in it. Well, she could always go to dancing, if everything else failed.

At lunch she casually remarked, "Richard Strong is coming to lunch on Thursday. I hope you will both be here."

"Who may Richard Strong be?" inquired her father.

"He is the brother of an old classmate, Mary Strong."

"Does he live here?" Jarvis asked.

"No. He lives in New York."

"What brings him to Sunnyside?"

"He didn't say."

"I never heard of him before," Professor Parkhurst said.

"Oh, yes. I used to talk about him a great deal. He's a fine fellow."

"Was he a special friend?" Jarvis asked, roused to some interest.

Bambi hesitated. She was getting in deeper than she planned.

"Yes, rather special. Not intimate, but special."

"What is his business?" asked her father.

"I don't remember."

"Rich idler, I suppose," Jarvis scorned.

"He used to work when I knew him."

"Well, we shall be glad to see the young man. Would you like me to change off my afternoon classes and remain at home?"

"Oh, no. Don't think of it!" Bambi cried, with unpremeditated warmth, which focussed Jarvis's eyes upon her. "He'll be here only a little while, and we will reminisce. He would bore you to death."

"I like to be cordial to your beaus."

"Professor Parkhurst, I am a married woman."

"Dear me, so you are. I am always forgetting Jarvis. If he is a bore, I'll lunch at the club."

"Possibly you would prefer me to lunch out, too," said Jarvis, pointedly.

"Not at all. I want you both here," said Bambi, with irritation, closing the incident. She had a feeling that she had not handled the situation as well as she had planned to do.

XII

THURSDAY, and Mr. Strong arrived with the inevitableness of dreaded events. Bambi felt convinced that his coming meant the premature death of her new-born career, so, naturally, she was prepared for grief. An element of amusement was added, however, by Jarvis's astonishing behaviour. Ever since the first mention of Mr. Strong's name he had shown unmistakable signs of dislike for that gentleman. It was the most remarkable revelation of his strange character. Having totally ignored Bambi himself, it distressed him to think of any other man being attracted by her. His references to Mr. Strong's coming were many and satirical. This display of manly inconsistency was nuts and ale to Bambi. She wondered how much Mr. Strong would play up, and she decided to give Jarvis Jocelyn an uncomfortable hour. She herself was an adept in amatory science, but she was a trifle unsure of Mr. Strong. However, she remembered a certain twinkle in his eye that augured well.

Because it was necessary to enlighten him as to the situation in advance, she arrayed herself most carefully to go and meet him. She encountered Jarvis on the stairs. He inspected her charming self, in a frock the colour of spring green leaves, topped by a crocus-coloured hat, like a flower. She deliberately pranced before him.

"Aren't I a delight to the eye?"

He stared at her coldly.

"Such ardent admiration embarrasses me, Jarvis," she protested.

"You look very nice," he admitted.

"Nice! Nice! I look like a daffodil, or a crocus, or some other pleasant spring beauty."

"I am glad you are so pleased with yourself. I trust Strong will be equally appreciative."

"I hope so when I have gone to so much trouble for him," she tossed back over her shoulder, in punishment.

As Mr. Strong stepped off the train and faced her, it would be hard to say whether admiration or astonishment constituted the greater part of his expression.

"Mrs. Jocelyn, why this is too kind of you!"

"Not at all. City people are so unused to our

devious country ways that I was afraid you would get lost."

Admiration was certainly on top now.

"If you don't mind, we will walk. It isn't far."

"The farther the better," he replied gallantly.

They set forth, down the shady village street, where the trees almost met overhead. Strong drew in deep breaths of the fresh morning air. His eyes kept returning to the little French figure at his side, so metropolitan, and yet so much the dominant note in any setting in which he had seen her. She chattered on, about the town, the university, and the sights.

"I refrain from pointing out the town hall, and the Carnegie Library," she said.

"I am grateful," he bowed.

"Are you married?" she darted at him, out of their impersonality.

"No, alas!"

"That helps a little."

His surprise was evident.

"I'm afraid I've got you into rather a box."

"I don't mind, if you will play Pandora."

"Thanks. You remember that I told you that my — my career was to be a secret from the 'Heavenly Twins'?"

"Yes."

"I suppose my career is about over, but I don't want them to know about it."

"Excuse me. What's that — about your career being over?"

"That's why you've come, isn't it? You didn't like the last story?"

He stared at her, and then burst out laughing.

"You thought I would come way out here from New York to tell you I didn't like it?"

"I have a high opinion of your kindness," she nodded.

"You nice little girl!" he added impetuously. "I came partly because I wanted to talk to you again, partly because I wanted to see Jarvis and the Professor."

She smiled and nodded encouragement.

"Then, too, we've had such a raft of letters about the 'Francesca' story that I want to talk to you about making a novel of it, to run serially, instead of the short stories we arranged for."

"A novel? You want me to write a novel?"

"We do."

"But I wonder if I could?" she said, in an awed voice.

"Of course you could. The second story was ripping."

"Was it? Was it?" She clapped her hands joyously.

"We can use it as Chapter Two, with very few changes, and from now on you can build your story about the characters you have introduced, with a spinal cord of plot to give it shape."

"It frightens me to death, to think of doing it. I have always thought it took genius to write a novel."

"My dear young woman, not in this day, when publishing houses gush books like so many geysers. Anybody with your gift of words and vivid reactions ought to find writing the line of least resistance. Of course you can do it."

"I'd adore trying if you'd help me."

"That's agreed."

He watched the concentration of her face with interest. She was wrapped in the thought of the book. She was attacking it, on all sides, with the lance of her mind. When she threw herself into every new interest with such abandon, it was no wonder that she gave out impressions with the same intensity.

"What about the box I'm in?" he reminded her. She came out of her trance with a start.

"I'd forgotten all about you," she said frankly. "I had to explain you to the 'Heavenly Twins,' somehow. If I said you were an editor, they would naturally ask why you came to see me?"

"I never thought of that. I am afraid I've put you in an embarrassing position."

"Oh, not at all. I've put you in one. I told them you were the brother of an old classmate, stopping over in town for a day, and that you were to look me up."

"Did I know you well when you were in college?" he smiled.

"I didn't intend to have you know me well, but Jarvis showed such unexpected interest in you that you are suspected of having known me rather well."

"Sort of an old affair?"

"Sort of," she laughed up at him.

"I get the idea. Have I your permission to play the rôle in my own way?"

"Yes, only don't betray me. The 'Twins' will only be around at lunch-time. After that, we can talk book."

"Good! I'll play up with my best amateur theatrical manner," he responded, as they entered the garden. "This is the arithmetical garden," he said

"It's true. Why, it's just like an 'Alice in Wonderland' experience, coming into something I have known in some other state of consciousness."

"Oh, yes, it's true. That's all I am, a sort of a camera."

"What a picture-book house!" he added. "It's just right for you."

As they went into the screened porch Jarvis arose, slowly, from the hammock. Mr. Strong stopped, really amazed, as the splendid figure, with its Apollo head, advanced. Bambi, too, was struck with some new alive quality in Jarvis that was compelling.

"This is Mr. Strong, Jarvis." The two men measured each other swiftly.

"I am glad to meet you," said Jarvis, with determined politeness.

"Thank you. It's a pleasure to meet Mrs. Jocelyn's husband."

Bambi laughed.

"Mrs. Jocelyn's husband is a new rôle for Jarvis," said she.

"I understand you and Mrs. Jocelyn are old friends," said Jarvis, perfunctorily.

"We are indeed old and dear friends."

"It has been some years since you met?"

"Yes, although I couldn't realize it this morning. There is a vivid quality about Mrs. Jocelyn which makes it impossible to forget anything about her. Don't you think so?"

Jarvis looked at Bambi, who grinned.

"Do you find me vivid, Jarvis?"

"You are certainly highly coloured."

"Ugh! That sounds like a Sunday supplement."

Conversation limped along like a tired cab horse. Even Bambi could not prod it into a semblance of life. Besides, she was choked with laughter at the picture of Jarvis sitting up, during his sacred work hours, full of bromides and manners. A discussion of New York almost released him. He thundered against modern cities with force. New York, discovered to be the home of Strong, became anathema to his host. It was the Goliath of Tyranny, Wealth, Degeneration, against which, David-like, he aimed his sling. Strong led him on, interested in his personality.

"Mrs. Jocelyn does not share your opinion of New York?"

"There are many of my opinions in which Mrs. Jocelyn does not share."

"Fortunately. Same opinions ought to constitute grounds for divorce," said Bambi.

"I understand you write plays, Mr. Jocelyn?"

"I do."

"You will have to endure New York, now and again, I suppose, when you begin to produce."

"We have formed a partnership," Bambi interpolated. "He writes and I sell."

"You are a lucky man," Strong complimented him.

Jarvis ignored the remark. Strong wondered why on earth Bambi had married him. He was wonderful to look at, but his manners were impossible. If he was in love with her, he disguised it successfully. The entrance of the Professor saved the situation.

"This is Mr. Strong, Professor. My father, Professor Parkhurst."

The Professor's hand-clasp and absent-minded smile seemed like a perfect character make-up. It was the kind of thing David Warfield would have played excellently. Strong had to shake himself to realize that these were real people, they were so individualized, so emphasized, like characters in a play.

"I am always glad to welcome my daughter's old friends," he said. "I forget when it was you knew each other, my dear."

"At college."

"Ah, yes, I remember. In college. How is your sister?"

"My sister?" repeated Strong. Bambi gasped. She had forgotten to tell him about Mary.

"I refer to your sister Mary," the Professor went on.

"Oh, sister Mary? Oh ——" Strong recovered himself.

"You have other sisters?"

"Yes, oh, yes. Many."

"Many, indeed! How many, may I ask?"

"Thirteen," at a venture.

"Thirteen sisters! That is astonishing! And you are the only brother?"

"The only one."

"Are they all living?"

"No. All dead."

"Not Mary?" exclaimed Bambi.

"No, no, I meant to omit Mary. All but Mary are gone."

"That is very sad," sighed the Professor. "Thirteen sisters! How were they named?"

"After the thirteen original states," replied Ananias Strong.

"Extraordinary, but Mary ——"

"Short for Maryland," prompted Strong.

Bambi almost choked. The subject seemed to fascinate her father.

"Is Mary married?" he inquired.

"Yes, quite. Quite married."

"I forget whether she visited us, my dear."

"No, Mary never came to Sunnyside."

"What a pity the friendships of our young days pass away, isn't it?"

"Not at all. It's a blessing," snapped Jarvis. "When you think of all the donkeys you played with in your youth ——"

"Mary was not a donkey," giggled Bambi.

"I wasn't speaking of Mary," he remarked.

"I thought you said you were going to lunch in your room to-day, Jarvis," the Professor remarked.

"That was yesterday," Bambi said quickly.

"Oh, I can never remember details."

"I thought that was what you did remember," challenged Jarvis.

"You refer to figures. They are not details. They are of enormous importance," began Professor Parkhurst.

"Now, children, let us not trot out the family skeleton. The 'Heavenly Twins' can talk from now

until doomsday tolls on the importance or non-importance of mathematics. It's as thrilling as modern warfare when they get started, but I can't afford to let them go, because they get so excited."

"Luncheon am served, Miss Bambi," announced Ardelia.

Bambi led the way, with a sigh of relief. If she could only get through with it, and get the happy family out of the way! Jarvis must be punished for bad behaviour, and she set herself to the task at once. She turned her attention wholly upon Mr. Strong. She laughed and shined her eyes at him, referring to the dear, old days in the most shameless manner. She fairly caressed him with her voice, and his devotion capped her own.

The Professor ate his lunch oblivious to the comedy, but Jarvis scarcely touched his. Some new, painful thing was at work in him. He resented it every time this man looked at Bambi. He wanted to knock him down, and order her off to her room. Most of all, he was furious with himself for caring. He had the same instinct which possessed him in New York when he rushed to the club to sweep her out of his life, and so save himself. He determined to leave the moment luncheon was over. She must never

know what a bad hour she had given him. Poor, ostrich Jarvis, with his head in the sands!

The luncheon was one of the most amusing events in Richard Strong's experience, and as for Bambi, she was at her best. She enjoyed herself utterly, until coffee put a period to Act Two.

XIII

MR. STRONG'S visit left its impress on all three members of the household. The Professor referred to him as the man with the thirteen sisters, and wished him reinvited to the house. Bambi treasured the day he spent with her as a turning point in her life. Surely new vistas opened up to her as a result of his coming. But to Jarvis the memory of the day was extremely painful. He took Bambi's punishment very seriously. He conceived Strong to be a former lover whom she welcomed back with affectionate ardour. He knew enough of her odd personality to be totally in the dark as to what she would do if she found herself suddenly in love with Strong. The main difficulty was, however, that he cared what she did — he, Jarvis, the free man! He realized that this was a flag of danger, and he answered the warning by sedulously avoiding Bambi for the next few days. She was too busy with the plans for the book to notice, although she caught him looking at her once or twice in a strange, speculative way.

Their peace was broken, however, a few days after Mr. Strong's famous visit by a letter from the Belasco office, accompanied by the play. Mr. Belasco regretted that the play was not just what he wanted. It had some excellent points, etc., but as he had already arranged for so many productions during the coming season, he felt he could not take on anything more at present. He would be glad to read anything Mr. Jocelyn might submit. Jarvis handed it on to Bambi.

"As I told you," he remarked.

"It never got to Belasco," said Bambi, confidently. "If it had, he would have seen its possibilities."

"Is something the matter?" inquired the Professor.

"Belasco has refused Jarvis's play."

"So. He didn't like that abominable woman any better than I did."

"She is not abominable!" from Jarvis.

"Be quiet, you two, and let me think."

"If you would learn concentration you would not need quiet in which to think," protested her parent.

"Oh, if I would learn to be a camel I wouldn't need a hump," returned Bambi, shortly.

"I don't think a hump would be becoming to you," mused the Professor, turning back to his book.

"We'll send it to Parke, Jarvis."

"What's the use?"

"Don't be silly. Every manager in New York shall see that play before we stop. We will send it to his wife. Maybe she will read it."

"Do as you like about it," he answered, with superb impersonality.

She took his advice and got it off at once, addressed to the actress. In a week came a letter in reply saying that Miss Harper would like to talk to Mr. Jocelyn about the play, and making an appointment at her house two days later.

This letter threw them into great excitement. Jarvis protested, first, that he could not be interrupted at his present work, which interested him. Bambi pooh-poohed that excuse. Then he said he had never talked to an actress, and he had heard they were a fussy lot. She would probably want him to change the play; as he would not do that, there was no use seeing the woman. Bambi informed him that if Miss Harper would get the play produced, it would pay Jarvis to do exactly what she wanted done. Then he protested he hated New York. He didn't want to go back there. Bambi finally lost her temper.

"If you are going to act like a balky horse, I give

you up. Until you get started, you will have to do a great many things you will not like, but if I were a man, I would never let any obstacles down me."

"When can I get a train?" meekly.

"You can take the same train we took before, tomorrow morning."

A great light broke for Jarvis.

"I can't go. I haven't any money."

"I have. I'll lend it to you."

"I must owe you thousands now."

"Not quite. We can do this all right."

"Have you got it all down?"

"In the Black Maria," she nodded.

So the long and the short of it was that Jarvis went off to New York again. No martyr ever approached the stake with a more saddened visage than he turned upon Bambi as the train pulled out. She waved her hand at him, smiling pleasantly, but he was sorrowful to the last glimpse.

"Poor old baby!" she laughed. "He shall stay in New York a while. He is getting too dependent on mamma."

She really welcomed his absence. It gave her so much more time for her own work, which absorbed

and delighted her. She had never known any sensation so pleasurable as that sense of adventure with which, each morning, she went to work. First, she patted the manuscript pile, which grew so amazingly fast. Then she filled her fountain pen and looked off over the treetops, beyond her window, until, like Peter Pan, she slipped off into another world, the Land of Make Believe, a country she had discovered for herself and peopled with human beings to suit her own taste. To be sure, her story concerned itself mainly with herself, Jarvis, and the Professor, but only the traits that made them individual, that made them "they," were selected, and the experiences she took them through were entirely of her own making. It was such fun to make them real by the power of words; to make many people know them and love them, or condemn them, as the case might be. In fact, creation was absorbing.

"It's very quiet around here since Jarvis left," commented the Professor a few days later.

"I never thought Jarvis was noisy."

"Well, he's like distant thunder."

"And heat lightning," laughed Bambi.

"Do you happen to miss him?"

"Me? Oh, not at all. Do you?"

"It always frets me to have things mislaid that I am used to seeing around. When you change the furnishings about, it upsets me."

"Do you look upon Jarvis as furniture?" she teased him.

"I look upon him as an anomaly."

"How so?"

"William Morris said, 'You should never have anything in your house which you do not know to be useful, and believe to be beautiful.'"

"I think Jarvis is beautiful."

"That great mammoth?"

"He's like Apollo, or Adonis."

"He certainly needs all Olympus to stretch out on. He clutters up this little house."

"I am sorry you don't like Jarvis, Professor."

"I do like him. I am used to him. I enjoy disagreeing with him. I wish he would come home."

His daughter beamed on him.

"Then he is also useful as a whetstone upon which you sharpen your wits. William Morris had nothing on me when I added Jarvis to our Penates."

Jarvis's first letter she read aloud to her father, and they both laughed at it, it was so Jarvis-like.

"Dear Bambi," he wrote, "I am in this vile cesspool of humanity again, and I feel like a drowning gnat. I did not go to the club, as you told me to, because I thought I could live more economically if I took a room somewhere and 'ate around.' I left my bag at the station, while I went to an address given me by a young man I met on the train. He said it was plain but clean. He told me some experiences he had had in boarding and lodging houses. They were awful! This place is an old three-story house, of the fiendish mid-Victorian brand — dark halls, high ceilings, and marble mantels. It seemed clean, so I took a room, almost as large as your linen closet, where I shall spend the few days I am here. My room has a court outlook, and was hotter than Tophet last night, but of course you expect to be hot in summer.

"I went to see Miss Harper, at the time appointed, this morning. She lives up Riverside Drive. She is a pleasant woman, who seems to know what she wants. She thinks that if I write a new third act, and change some things in the second act, Mr. Parke might produce it. I defended the present form, and tried to show her that the changes she wants will weaken the message of the play. She says she doesn't care a fig for my message. She wants a good part. My impulse was to take my work and leave, but I remembered how important this chance seemed to you, so I swallowed my pride, though it choked me, and promised to make a scenario of the changes, to submit at once. I may have to stay on a few days to do things over as she wants me to do. The play is ruined for me, already.

"I suppose it is cool and quiet where you are. The noise and heat are terrible here. I forgot to say that I have to hurry with 'Success,' because the lady is going to Europe in a fortnight, and insists it must be finished by that time. I hope she won't crack the whip. It makes me nervous. I am such a new trained bear.

"I'd rather argue with the Professor to-night than be here, or even talk with you. I wish you didn't want me to be a success, Bambi. Couldn't you let me off? My regards to you both. Tell Ardelia that nobody in New York knows anything about cooking. There seem to be thousands of people eating around, and oh, such food! Good night.

"JARVIS."

"He is homesick," said the Professor, as Bambi finished and folded the letter.

"Homesick to argue with you," snapped Bambi.

"He said, 'Or talk with you.'"

"Excuse me. He said, 'Or even talk with you.' I shall punish him for that."

"He isn't comfortable. Hot and mid-Victorian. He isn't responsible," excused her father.

"He won't be comfortable when he gets the penalty," said Bambi, fiercely.

"I am surprised that he consented to change his play. Samson's locks are certainly shorn."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You have shaved him, my dear."

"Are you calling me Delilah?"

"You can't deny that he would never be where he is, doing what he is now, if he were not married to you."

"What of it? Time he had a little discipline. He needs it and his work needs it."

"Well, he's getting it."

"Are you pitying him because he isn't as mad as he was when I caught him?"

"He's still mad, nor' by nor'east."

"I'll make a human being and a big artist out of Jarvis before I am through."

"Be careful that you don't lose everything in him that makes him Jarvis."

"Do you think that I can't do it?"

"I only say that creation, like vengeance, is God's. It is dangerous when man tampers with it."

Upon a sudden impulse, she went to lean over him and kiss his bald head.

"I'll remember that, Herr Vater," said she.

As the result of their talk, her reply to Jarvis was not so fierce as she had planned to make it, in her first indignation at his "even you." She did not pat him on the back for making concessions about the play.

She merely said she was glad he was acting so sensibly about it, and that if she was the mainspring of that action she was proud. As for letting him off, he was the only living person who could keep him on, or let him off. If he was the sort of softling who could not stand up under life's discipline because it was uncomfortable or unpleasant, then no power on earth could hold him to accomplishment. But, endowed as he was, with brain, imagination, sensibilities, health, it lay in his power to actually create himself, to say "such and such a man will I be," making every touch of life's sculpturing fingers count, "even the pinches," she added, picturesquely. Of course he must stay in New York as long as necessary. If he was uncomfortable, he must move. He could not do good work under irritating conditions. She told him that the Professor missed him, and Ardelia contemplated sending a box of goodies. She omitted any mention of her own state of mind or feelings in regard to him or his actions. Here was the punishment for his "even you," and he pondered long over it.

"What on earth did she marry me for? She doesn't care a straw about me, only what I can make of myself," he mused, a trifle bitterly. But he went to work at "Success" with the abandon of a house-

wrecker, pulling it to the foundation. He used the sledge-hammer on scenes he loved. He loosened and pitched out phrases he had mulled over long, and in the dust of the affray he forgot the sting that lay behind Bambi's words. If she wanted him famous, famous would he be.

XIV

THREE boiling days, and the major part of three boiling nights, Jarvis sweated and toiled over the scenario for the revised two acts. It was work that irked him, because he hated doing things over when the first glad joy of inspiration was gone, but he stuck to it. And the fourth day he set out for the house far up the Riverside Drive, armed with his manuscript and a sense of triumph.

Arrived at his destination, the butler announced that Miss Harper had gone on a motor trip for two days. No, she had left no word. Angry at himself for not having provided against such a situation by an appointment with the lady, furious at the thought of two days' delay, he betook himself to the Parke offices in the hope of finding some word for him there. Mr. Parke was busy and could not see him, announced the keeper of the keys to heaven, who sat at the outer gate. No, Mrs. Parke had left no word for a Mr. Jocelyn. No, she knew nothing of Mrs.

Parke's plans or movements. No, she could not ask Mr. Parke. Besides, he wouldn't know.

Jarvis descended the many stairs in a thickening gloom. Wait, wait, wait! That was part of the discipline Bambi talked of so wisely. Well, he then and there decided that the day would come when he would walk past every managerial outpost in the city, and invade the sanctum without so much as presenting a visiting-card.

The automobile trip lasted four days instead of two, and he spent them in a fret of impatience. He worked at the third act, sure of her approval. On the fifth day she received him. She liked the idea of the second act — she would have none of the new third act. At the end of his enthusiastic sketch of how it would run, the reading of new scenes, the telling of new business, she yawned slightly, and said she didn't like it at all. Unless he could get a good third act, she wouldn't care for the piece. He assured her this would be a good third act when it was worked up. No use working it up. She knew now she would never like it. Jarvis rose.

"I will submit the new third act to-morrow. Have you any suggestions you wish to incorporate?"

"Oh, no. If I could write plays, I would not

be acting them. It's easier and more lucrative to write."

"I don't find it easy enough to be a bore," replied Jarvis. "I will be here at eleven to-morrow."

"Make it three."

"Very well, three."

"Some of the pinches," he muttered as he climbed the bus to go back to his hot hall bedroom, his mind a blank, and only twenty-five hours in which to work out a new third act.

He stripped for action and worked until midnight. Then he foraged on Fourth Avenue for food at an all-night café patronized by car-men, chauffeurs, and messenger boys. He ate ravenously. Afterward he swung downward to Madison Square Park, to stretch his tired body. The stars were very bright, but a warm wind crowded people on to the streets. A restless, aimless crowd of strollers! Several of them spoke to Jarvis. Many of them marked him. But he paid no attention to individuals. His mind was full of the whole picture. Mile after mile of narrow streets between blocks of stone and brick and wood. Thousands of people tramping the miles like so many animals driven from the jungle by fire or flood. This men called civilization — this City

"SOFTLINGS! POOR SOFTLINGS!" JARVIS MUTTERED, BAMBI'S WORDS COMING BACK TO HIM

of Stone Blocks! How far was it from the jungle? Hunger, thirst, lust, jealousy, anger, courage, and cowardice — these were the passions of both fastnesses. How far was Man from his blood brother, the Wolf?

He reached the green square, and started to cross it. On every bench, crowded together, huddled the sleepers. He walked slowly, and looked at them closely. Most of them were old — old men and old women — warped out of all semblance to human beings, their hideous faces and crooked bodies more awful in the abandon of sleep. Some young ones there were, too: a thin boy with a cough; a tired girl of the streets, snatching a moment of sleep before she went about her trade. It was like some fantastic dream.

"Softlings! Poor softlings!" Jarvis muttered, Bambi's words coming back to him. The tawdry little girl stirred, saw him, spoke to him, her hand upon his arm.

"Go get a decent bed, child," he said, giving her some money.

Her eyes shone at him in the half light like Bambi's, and he shuddered. As she sped away a sudden rage possessed him. Why did they endure, these patient

beasts? They numbered thousands upon thousands, these down-and-outs. Why did they not stand together, rise up, and take? Why didn't he shout them awake, and lead them himself? "Gimme a nickel to get a drink?" whined a voice at his elbow.

"Here, you, move on!" said the policeman, roughly, arousing Jarvis from his trance.

On the way uptown to his room he thought it over. If they could organize and stand together, they wouldn't be what they were. It was because they were morally and physically disintegrated that they were derelicts. This waste was part of the price we must pay for commercial supremacy, for money power, for — oh, sardonic jest! — for a democracy.

He went back to work with squared shoulders, and worked until dawn. At three the next afternoon he again presented himself to the Parke butler. Madame was indisposed, could see no one. Mr. Jocelyn was to come the next day at three.

This time he wasted no energy in rage at the delay. He began to see that this was no sham battle on a green hillside of a summer's day, but a real hand-to-hand fight. It was to place him, for all time, at the head of the regiment or with the discards. He had believed that what he had to say was the most im-

portant thing, that this errand Bambi had sent him on was a stupid interruption. But all at once he saw it straight. This was his fight, here and now. He would not go back to her until he had won. He must find the way to finance himself in the meantime. No more provisions from the Professor or his daughter. As he made his way downtown he thought over all the possibilities of making enough to live on. He had never bothered his head about it before. Like the sparrow, he had been provided for. But something of his arrogant demanding of life seemed to have fled, a sort of terror had been planted in him by that view of the park-bench sleepers.

How he wished Bambi were here to advise him, to laugh at him, or with him! The thought of her was constantly creeping into his mind, to be shoved out by a determined effort of his will. He told himself he was becoming as boneless as the Professor, who relied on her for everything. That night he wrote to her:

"I seem to have come to my senses to-day for the first time. Queer how a man can go on walking, talking, and thinking in his sleep. I don't know why I should have wakened up to-day, but a walk I took last night at midnight stirred something in me. And

a futile attempt to see Miss Harper to-day did the rest. You saw clearly, as you so often do. This is my fight, right here and now. I must make somebody believe in this play and produce it. It may take a long time — months, perhaps — but I must stay and face it out.

"I wanted you sorely to-night, Miss Mite, to talk it over with me. I am always coming upon things I want to talk over with you, these days. You have such a decided way of seeing things.

"I shall not be needing any more money, because I am about to make something, on the side, for myself. Keep the Black Maria, and when the play goes we will have a mighty reckoning. I am not going to say thanks for what you and the Professor have done for me. I am going to act thanks.

"I shall read the scenario of the third act to Miss Harper to-morrow, the gods and the lady permitting. This is the *third* third act. I trust it will be 'three and out,' or, rather, three and on. My regards to the Professor and you. It is very hot here, and I relax by thinking myself in the arithmetical garden. It seems years ago since I was there. Has the Professor laid out any new figures? I think the 'X' bed ought to be wild orchids. He will understand."

He took the letter out to mail, and went for another walk. The night crowds began to interest him. He planned to take a different walk every night, and learn something of this city which he was setting out to conquer.

The next morning he went from one newspaper office to another trying to get a job. His lack of experience handicapped him everywhere. Cub reporters were as thick as summer flies. He walked, to save carfare.

At three he gained admittance to Miss Harper and read her the new scenario. She decided that she liked the second one better. He arranged to go to work on it at once, so that she might have Mr. Parke read it before she sailed. The siren Hope sang a happy song to Jarvis as he swung down the drive. He had the golden apple in his grasp this time.

"I'm coming, oh, you people," he apostrophized them with his old assurance. "You'll hear from me soon!"

He celebrated his coming fortune with a fifty-cent table d'hôte, to which he did full justice. Up in the hot hall bedroom he took stock of ammunition. If he went light on food, he could afford to keep right at the play until he finished it. He estimated just what amount he could spend a day, and divided up his cash into the daily portion, each in an envelope. He purchased an alcohol stove and a coffee-pot, and set to work.

There were only twelve days in which to do or die,

and he went at it in a frenzy. Day faded into night, night faded into day, marked only by the thumping of the outraged chambermaid, at whom he thundered. When he remembered, he dashed out for food, but for the most part he drank coffee, and more coffee.

Once he went for a long walk. He could never remember, afterward, whether it was day or night. But during it he thought out a new scene, and ran miles to get back and get it down. He grew thinner and more hollow-eyed each day, but he cared for nothing but accomplishing this thing. He knew the act was good. He felt sure Miss Harper would like it.

At dawn of the day he was to finish it he rushed into a dairy lunch to get a sandwich and a glass of milk. While he waited for the heavy-eyed clerk to get it, he picked up a morning paper. The date caught his eye. This was his last day of grace, sure enough. He must call up and get an appointment for the afternoon, for Miss Harper would be sailing to-morrow. Idly his eye travelled across the page, and suddenly was riveted by a headline: "Bertram Parke and his wife, Helen Harper, sail on the *Mauretania* to-day. They will hasten to London, to sign a contract for a play for Miss Harper by Galsworthy,

which will be produced in New York immediately on her return."

The print blurred before Jarvis's eyes. Everything swayed and swam. Out of the chaos came the voice of the tired clerk, shouting: "Say, you, what's the matter with you? Can't you take your sandwich? Think I'm going to hold it all day?"

Jarvis didn't understand him. He didn't even hear him. He just laid down his last quarter and went out, a bit unsteadily.

"Soused!" grinned the clerk, looking after him.

XV

BAMBI sat, chin on hand, staring off into the distance so long that the Professor's attention was finally attracted to her. She held Jarvis's letter in her hand — his call-to-arms letter.

"No bad news, I hope?" ventured her father.

"Oh, no; good news. The best. Jarvis is alive!"

"Why, you didn't think he was dead?"

"Yes, in a sense he was dead."

"Strange I never noticed it."

"I mean that he was only fully alive to himself. He was dead to other people. He has been dangerously self-centred."

"And now ——"

"Now many hands are knocking at his postern gate!"

"What enigmatic things you do say, my child!"

"Don't you understand? Jarvis has built a high wall about himself, his precious self. He was a sort of superman, called to sit in a high tower and dream,

to think, to formulate a message to the world. No claims of earth were allowed to enter in."

"But you climbed over the wall? You were a claim of earth?"

"You know how I sneaked in when he wasn't looking."

"If you could read me the letter, Bambina, or such portions of it as are not private, I might understand better what you are trying to say."

"I'll read it to you. It's none of it private. He has nothing private to say to me."

The Professor composed himself to listen, while she read Jarvis's long screed aloud. At the end he, too, sat thoughtfully a few moments, his finger tips neatly matched in church steeples before him.

"I'm sometimes amazed at your judgment," he said.

"Why my judgment?"

"I never would have seen any possibilities, myself, in the Jarvis whom you married."

"Speaking of cryptic remarks ——"

"I was trying to convey to your mind my belief that he may turn out a real man."

"Oh, Jarvis was a good investment. I knew it at the time. Poor old thing, he's frightfully lonesome."

"He ought to come home for a while, on a visit. I am saving several topics for disagreement."

"No, it's better for him to stick it out. No human being ever treated Jarvis like this Miss Harper is treating him, and it's fine for him."

"Aren't you rather Spartan, my dear?"

"I am. I have felt all along that I had pushed him overboard before I was sure he could swim. Now I know he can."

"You may tell him for me that our agreement was for two years, and it holds good."

"I don't know what your agreement was, Herr Professor, but if it had money in it, cancel it. I want him to learn that lesson, too."

"Poor old Jarvis!"

"Don't you poor old Jarvis me. Remember the abuse you heaped on him when I married him. I want him to be practical!"

The Professor rose and started for the garden.

"It's your own affair, my dear."

The outcome of Bambi's thoughts was a letter to Mr. Strong. She invited him to spend the week-end with her father and herself, to talk over the book and other things. She added that she hoped that he would prepare himself with data about the thirteen

sisters, because her father would be primed with questions about them. Mr. Strong's acceptance came by return mail, and he, himself, followed Saturday morning.

Bambi met him, as on the other occasion, and at sight of his cordial smile she suddenly felt as if he were an old friend.

"I am so glad to see you!" she exclaimed in her impulsive way.

Mr. Strong shook her hand vigorously.

"It's mutual, I may say," and he fell into step. "Bless this old town, it's like ——"

"A soporific," she supplied, and joined his laugh.

"How's the Professor? And my old friend Jarvis?"

"The Professor is in a quiver of expectation to talk sisters with you."

"Good! I am ready for him. And Jarvis?"

"Jarvis was the 'other things' I asked you here to talk about."

"I see."

"He's in New York."

"He is? Why didn't he look me up?"

"He doesn't like you."

"He took us seriously the other day?"

"He did."

"Jealous, is he? That isn't why he is in New York?"

"Oh, no! He went to sell a play."

"Belasco refused it?"

"Yes, and two others. The Parkes have it now. They are going to take it."

"That's good."

"Jarvis may have to stay in the city for some time. He doesn't know any one. He hates cities. I suspect he is economizing too much to be comfortable. I thought maybe you would look him up — keep an eye on him."

"I should be delighted to, if you think he doesn't dislike me too much."

"Oh, no, he was annoyed that day we flirted so outrageously, but I know he would be glad to see you."

"I had a wonderful time that day, myself."

"It was fun. Everybody was so at cross purposes."

"Do I continue the rôle of old beau?"

"Oh, no. You've established yourself with father, so there's no use in playing up."

"Old beau exit with regret," he sighed.

"You're a nice man, and I'm glad of you."

"Thanks. Give me Jocelyn's address before you

forget it. Ah, there's the Professor now," he added, as he pocketed the card and hastened into the garden.

The rest of the two days they spent in easy companionship. They played tennis, they drove through the woods in an old surrey, Bambi as whip. Then, when the Professor's early bedtime removed him to the second story, they sat on the moonlit piazza and talked.

The novel had grown into ten chapters. Three instalments had been published, and the public was showing a most flattering interest in it. Strong brought a box of letters for her to read from enthusiastic readers.

"It's extraordinary how real you make your characters when you are such a novice," he said to her.

"I tell you I am a photographer. The musician in my story is Jarvis, with a thin disguise. The old fiddler is my father, and the girl is shamelessly 'me.'"

"Delightfully you," he corrected her. "Has the Professor or your husband read any of your stories?"

"No. They never read magazines. Jarvis saw the announcement of the prize story, and commented on the use of my name, but I threw him off the scent easily."

"I don't see why you don't 'fess' up, now that the thing is an established success."

"No, not yet. It's such a lovely secret. I want to wait for just the moment to spring it on them."

"Couldn't you invite me in when that moment comes?"

"We'll see. I may invite the neighbours in, and crown myself with a laurel wreath."

"I'd rely on your doing it in a novel way."

"The surest way of being considered eccentric is just to be yourself. So few of us have the nerve."

They talked late. He told her his plans and hopes for the magazine. He spoke of his people, of his past life, of his preparation for his work, and when the clock finally interrupted with twelve strokes, they arose, nearer friends than ever.

After Strong's departure Bambi wrote Jarvis to prepare him for the friendly visit:

"You'll remember Richard Strong, the brother of Maryland and the thirteen sisters? He came to spend the week-end with us, and expressed such disappointment at your absence that I gave him your address so he could look you up. Do be nice to him. I am sure you will like him when you get to know him. He is a fine, sensible fellow. He might find something for you to do on a magazine, if you wanted

it. I did not speak to him about it, thinking you could do it best yourself, if you chose to. We had a pleasant two days' visit — much talk, tennis, drives, and more talk. It seemed to please and rest him, and we enjoyed him greatly. The Professor has taken a great liking to him.

"By the time this reaches you, you will have read the new third act to your leading lady. I feel so confident that she is going to like it. Wire me when she accepts. I can't wait for a letter. Good luck and congratulations, from both of us.

"BAMBI."

"P. S. Will you come home after the contract is signed?"

She tripped down to the corner in the moonlight to mail the letter, congratulating herself that she had handled the report of Mr. Strong's visit with great tact. She recalled Jarvis's unexpected jealousy with a smile. Where was he at this moment? Tossing in a hot bedroom, or prowling the streets, as he seemed prone to do these nights?

She pondered the processes which made success so easy for some people — hers, for instance, a happy accident — while others, Jarvis-like, had to be tied to the wheel before the fickle goddess released them and crowned them. Was it all chance? Or was there some big plan back of it all? Was she spared

this incarnation that she might strive harder in the next? Was Jarvis expiating for past immunity? It was all a tangle, surely, to our mortal eyes.

She gave it up, snapped off her light, and went to bed. A shaft of silver, like a prayer rug, lay across the floor.

"Lady Moon, shine softly on my Knight of the Broken Lance," she whispered, as she closed her eyes.

XVI

THERE was a faint idea in Jarvis's mind, as he staggered out of the all-night lunch, of swimming after the *Mauretania* to overtake the Parkes. Then his wandering senses collected themselves. He realized that the vessel did not sail until eleven, or thereabouts; that there were still several hours before that.

He hurried back to his room, dressed carefully, took the manuscript, and started out. It never occurred to him to telephone. Arrived at the house, the butler informed him that the Parkes had left in the motor at 8:30. No word had been left for Mr. Jocelyn.

Jarvis's jaw was set as he started downtown. He went to the wharf where the steamer lay, but there was only fifteen minutes left before her sailing. It was impossible to find out anything from anybody. So, with a sardonic calm, he watched the steamer slowly loosing from the wharf and making her stately exit.

On the way uptown he made up his mind as to the next move. He would begin action to-day on the Charles Frohman forces. He must also try to find a job. His resources were about exhausted.

At the Empire Theatre, where the king of managers rules, there was actually an elevator to carry one up to the throne room and its ante-chambers. At a window, in a sort of cashier's booth, a boy received Jarvis's manuscript, numbered and entered it on the file.

"How soon will it be read?" Jarvis asked.

"Oh, six weeks or so," said the youth.

"No possible chance of seeing Mr. Frohman?"

"Only by appointment. He is in Europe now."

Jarvis relinquished his precious bundle and departed. It occurred to him, when he reached the street, that part of his depression was from hunger. He bought a sandwich and coffee at a Childs restaurant. Later, he went into a drug store and looked up magazine offices in the telephone book. Then he set out. From *Collier's* to the *Cosmopolitan* is many a weary mile. And Jarvis walked it, visiting all the intervening offices.

In only one case did he get to the editor. Mr. Davis, of *Munsey's*, let him come in, and was decent

to him, promised to read anything he sent in at once, took his address, and made him feel like a human being. Many a young writer besides Jarvis has to thank Mr. Bob Davis for just such a bit of encouragement. For the most part, he saw clerks or secretaries who made excuses for the editor, took his name and address with the same old "Come in again." Out in the hot sun the pavement wavered and melted into hillocks before his dizzy eyes. So he went back to the hot bedroom, which seemed, all at once, a haven of rest.

He threw himself on the hard bed and was asleep in a second. It seemed æons later that he was dragged up from the depths of slumber by continued pounding on his door. The slattern chambermaid announced that a gentleman wished to see him. He called to her it must be a mistake. He didn't know any gentlemen.

"'E h'ast for Jarvis Jocelyn. 'Ere's 'is card," she retorted, opening the door and marching to the bed with it.

"Richard Strong. Tell him I'm out."

"Hi've already said you was in. Hi see you come hup."

"The devil! Where is he?"

"Coolin' 'is 'eels in the 'all."

"Say I'll be down in a minute. Ask him to wait."

"Hi get you," said she, and clomped out.

Then Jarvis's eye fell on Bambi's letter on his table, unopened. It must have come the day before, when he was lost in his play. He glanced through it. At the mention of Strong's visit he frowned. He read that part twice. There was no doubt of it. Strong had the only chance with her. He made no secret of his devotion to her, and the probabilities were that now that he, Jarvis, was out of the way, she would realize how much she cared for Strong.

"Well, what is, is," he muttered. He'd have no favours from Strong, though, that was sure.

Twenty minutes later, shaved and dressed, he descended upon his guest, who sat in torment, on a hall-tree shelf, in Stygian darkness.

"How do you do?" said Jarvis, stiffly. "Sorry to keep you waiting in this hole of Calcutta."

"How are you, Jocelyn?" said Strong, cordially. "Your wife gave me your address, and I thought you might save me from a deadly evening by dining with me at Claremont."

"Thank you, I have dined," replied Jarvis.

"So early? Well, come with me while I get a bite

somewhere, and we will go to a show, or hear some music."

"Much obliged. I am engaged for the evening."

"Oh, that's a pity. Your wife told me you were a friendless stranger in a foreign land, so I lost no time in coming to look you up."

"Very kind of you."

"I had a charming week-end in the country. We missed you very much."

"Indeed?"

"You're a lucky chap, Jocelyn. Your wife is one of the most enchanting women I ever met. She is unique."

"I am glad she pleases you."

"My dear fellow, I hope I haven't annoyed you. I meant no disrespect in complimenting you on Mrs. Jocelyn's charm."

"You made your admiration a trifle conspicuous the last time I saw you," said Jarvis in a rage.

"I apologize, I assure you. I bid you good night."

"Unmannerly boor," was Strong's comment as he turned toward the avenue.

"Hope that settles Mr. Richard Strong," fumed Jarvis as he turned away from the avenue.

Two letters were written Bambi that night concerning this meeting. Mr. Strong wrote:

"Dear Lady: I cannot possibly tell you how much of the fragrance of the garden, and of you, stays with me even in the heat and ugliness of New York. I am so grateful to you and the Professor for your hospitality and your friendship.

"I went to see your Jarvis to-night, as I promised to do, but he made it exceedingly plain to me that he desired neither my visit nor my acquaintance. I thought he looked very tired and a trifle hectic. No doubt the heat has worn on him. I don't mean to alarm you. I am only searching for some excuse for my own comfort for his reception of me.

"I shall look for the next chapters with eagerness. None of your many readers knows my proprietary delight in that tale of yours.

"My cordial regards to your father, and to yourself my thanks and my best wishes. Faithfully,

"Richard Strong."

Jarvis was not so politic. He permitted himself some rancor.

"Dear Bambina: I did not get your letter announcing Strong's visit, and his approaching descent upon me, until this evening. He followed close upon its heels. I have no doubt you intended it kindly sending him here to look me up, but the truth is I am in no mood for callers, and I fear I made that rather plain to your friend. I may as well say, frankly, I

disliked him exceedingly on the occasion of his visit to you. It would be useless for me to try to disguise the fact. I would never dream of asking him for work on his magazine, which I consider of a very low grade.

"By some misunderstanding the Parkes sailed sooner than they expected, and failed to see my play. I have offered it to Charles Frohman. I should prefer him to any other New York manager.

"The weather here is extremely hot, and I have been working rather hard, so I am a little knocked out. Will you send me the manuscript of my two unfinished plays you will find on the table in my study? With regards to the Professor and yourself. Hastily,

"JARVIS."

Having got this off his mind and into the mail-box, Jarvis went for his nightly prowl. His steps turned toward the crowded East Side district, where a new interest was beginning to attract him. Until now "men" were his only concern. These hot nights, as he tramped along, discouraged with his own futility, he was beginning to discover "Man."

It seemed to him that all the children in the world were playing in these crowded streets. He had never turned his attention to children before. And he began to look at the shrewd, old faces, even to talk to a group here and there. They made him think of monkeys, clever, nervous little beasts.

He skirted several mothers' meetings conducted on the sidewalk. He even went into a saloon to have a look at the men, but the odour of stale beer and hot bodies was insufferable and drove him out. As he sauntered along, he passed an unlighted business building. Out of the shadow a girl stole, and fell in step beside him.

"Hello, kid!" she began, her hand tucked under his arm. Before she could complete her sentence, a policeman was upon them. He laid hold of the girl roughly.

"Now I got you! I told you to keep off'n this block," he growled.

"What's the matter with you? What do you want?" Jarvis demanded.

"I want her to come along with me. That's what I want."

"She hasn't done anything."

"You bet she hasn't. I didn't give her time."

"Let go of her! What charge are you taking her on?"

"Don't get fresh, young guy. The charge is s'licitin'."

"That's a lie! She's a friend of mine, and she merely said, 'Good evening.'"

The copper laughed derisively, and the girl turned a cynical young-old face to Jarvis.

"Much obliged, kid, but it ain't no use. He's got me spotted."

"If you arrest her, you must arrest me."

"I got nottin' on you."

"Yes, you have. I said 'Good evening' to her, just what she said to me."

"Get the hell out of here, and don't give me none of your lip, or I'll run you in. Come along!" the policeman ordered, and he and the girl started on toward Jefferson Market. Jarvis marched beside them. When they turned in at the door where prisoners are entered, the policeman again ordered Jarvis off.

"Go round in front if you're crazy to be in on this," he said.

Jarvis hurried round to the front door and went in. The courtroom was packed. He had trouble in finding a seat, but he finally got into the front row, just behind the rail that divides the dock from the spectators. One half of the room was full of swine — fat, blowse-necked Jewish men, lawyers, cadets, owners of houses — all the low breeds who fatten off the degradation of women. Their business was to pay the fines or go bail.

The other half of the room, to Jarvis's horror, was full of young boys and girls, some almost children, there out of curiosity. A goodly number of street walkers sat at the back. It was their habit to come into court to see what judge was sitting. If it was one who levied strict fines, or was prone to send girls up to Bedford, they spent the evening there, instead of on the streets.

The first case called, after Jarvis's entrance, was that of the keeper of a disorderly house. She was horrible. He felt she ought to be branded in some way, so that she and her vile trade would be known wherever she went. A man went her bail, and she flounced out in a cloud of patchouli.

Two coloured girls were brought in, and sent up for thirty days. Then several old women, the kind of human travesties Jarvis had seen sleeping on the benches, were marched before the judge, who called them all by name.

"Well, Annie," he said to one of them, "you haven't been here for some weeks. How did it happen this time?"

"I've been a-walkin' all day, your honour. I guess I fell asleep in the doorway."

"You've been pretty good lately. I'll let you off easy. Fine, one dollar."

"Oh, thanks, your honour." She was led off, and Jarvis sickened at the sight.

A series of young girls followed, cheaply modish, with their willow plumes and their vanity bags. Some cheerful, some cynical, some defiant. One slip of a thing heard her sentence, looked up in the judge's face, and laughed. Jarvis knew that never, while he lived, would he forget that girl's laugh. It was into the face of our whole hideous Society that she hurled that bitter laugh.

Then his girl was brought in. He saw her clearly for the first time. A thin, wizened little face, framed in curly red hair, with bright, birdlike eyes. Her thin, flat child's figure was outlined in a tight, black satin dress, with a red collar and sash. Her quick glance darted to him, and she smiled. The policeman made his charge. The judge glanced at her.

"Anything to say for yourself?"

She shook her head wearily. Jarvis was out of his seat before he thought.

"I have something to say for her. I am the man she was supposed to have approached."

"Silence in the courtroom," said the judge, sternly.

"She didn't say one word to me, except 'Good evening,'" shouted Jarvis.

"Is that the man?" the judge asked the officer.

"Yes. He's made a lot of trouble, too, trying to make me arrest him."

"If you have any evidence to give in this case, come to the front and be sworn in."

Jarvis jumped the railing and stood before him. The oath was administered.

"Now, tell me, briefly, what the girl said to you."

"She said, 'Hello, kid!' "

A titter went over the courtroom. The clerk rapped for order.

"Then what happened?"

"This officer arrested her. I told him what had passed between us, and insisted on being arrested, too. We said the same thing, the girl and I."

"The girl has been here before. She has a record."

"Where are the men she made the record with?" demanded Jarvis.

"We do not deal with that feature of it," replied the judge, turning to the officer.

"And why not?" demanded Jarvis. "It takes a solicitor and the solicited to make a crime. What kind of laws are these which hound women into the trade and hound them for following it?"

"It is neither the time nor the place to discuss that.

The case is dismissed. This court has no time to waste, Flynn, in cases where there's no evidence," he added, sternly, to the detective.

The girl nodded to Jarvis and beckoned him, but instead of following her he went back to his seat. He would follow this ghastly puppet show to its end.

At a word from the judge a tall, handsome, gray-haired woman approached the bench. She wore no hat, and Jarvis marked her broad brow and pleasant smile and the wise, philosophic eyes. Her face looked cheerful and normal in this place of abnormalities.

"Who is that woman?" Jarvis asked his neighbour.

"Probation officer," came the answer.

Jarvis watched her with passionate interest. He noted her low-voiced answers to the judge's questions about the girl in hand. The curiosity seekers in the audience could not hear, no matter how they craned their necks. He watched her calm smile as she turned to take the girl off into her own office. He made up his mind to talk with her before the night was over.

Case followed case as the night wore on. It seemed to Jarvis that this bedraggled line had neither beginning nor end. He saw it winding through this place

night after night, year after year, the old-timers and the new recruits. Uptown reputable citizens slept peacefully in their beds; this was no concern of theirs. He was no better than the rest, with his precious preaching about the brotherhood of man. What the body politic needed was a surgeon to cut away this abscess, eating its youth and strength.

The screams of a girl who had just been given a sentence to Bedford startled him out of his thoughts. She pleaded and cried, she tried to throw herself at the judge's feet, but the policeman dragged her out, the crowd craning forward with avid interest. She was the last case before the court adjourned. Jarvis leaned across the rail and asked the probation officer if he might speak to her.

"Perhaps you will walk along with me toward my home?" she suggested. He gladly assented. In a few moments she came out, hatted and ready for the street. She looked keenly at this tall, serious youth who had so unexpectedly arraigned the court.

"My name is Jarvis Jocelyn," he began. "There are so many things I want to ask you about."

"I shall be glad to tell you what I can," she said quietly.

"Have you been in this work long?"

"Eleven years."

"Good God! how can you be so calm? How can you look so hopeful?"

"Because I am hopeful. In all the thousands of cases I have known I have never once lost hope. When I do, my work is over."

"You're wonderful!" he exclaimed.

"No, I am reasonable. I don't expect the impossible. I am glad of every inch of ground gained. I don't demand an acre. If one girl is rescued out of twenty ——"

"But why does it need to be at all?" Jarvis interrupted her.

"Why does disease need to be? Why does unhappiness need to be, or war, or the money-lust that will one day wreck us? We only know that these things are. Our business is to set about doing what we can."

"One girl out of twenty," he repeated. "What becomes of the other nineteen?"

"I said I was glad of one girl in twenty. Sometimes several of the nineteen come out all right. Bedford helps a great many. They marry, they keep straight, or — they die very soon."

"Tell me about Bedford."

She outlined the work done in that farm home, which is such a credit to New York. She told him of the honour system, and all the modern methods employed there.

"Can you get opportunities for girls who want the chance?"

"Plenty of them. I have only to ask. When I need money, it comes. Lots of my girls are employed in uptown shops, leading good, hard-working lives."

"Where does this money come from?"

"Private donations. That is one of my hope signs — the widespread interest in rescue work."

"The old ones — those aged women?"

She sighed. "Yes, I know, they are terrible! There is a mighty army of them in New York. We grind them in and out of our courts, month after month. The institutions are all full. There is so much grafting that the poor-farm has been delayed, year after year, so there is no place to send them."

"Where do they go?"

"Into East River, most of them, in the end."

"Do you mean to say that we pay the machinery of the law to put these cases through the courts, over and over again, and then provide no place to harbour the derelicts?"

"That's about the case," she replied.

"How can we live and endure such things?" Jarvis demanded passionately.

"I used to feel that way about it. I used to be sick through and through with it, but I have grown to see that there is improvement, that there is a new social sense growing among us. Uptown women of leisure come to our night courts, take part in our working-girls' strikes, and women, mind you, are always slowest to feel and react to new forces. Don't be discouraged," she smiled at him, stopping at the door.

"May I come and see you, some time? Are you ever free, or would that be asking too much?"

"No. Come! Come in Sunday afternoon if you like."

She held out her hand, and he grasped it warmly.

"You're great," he said boyishly, at which she laughed.

"We need you young enthusiasts," she said.

As he walked uptown to his lodgings Jarvis faced the fact that up to this present moment he had been on the wrong track. He had tried to pull from the top. That was all right, if only he also tried to push from the bottom. The world needed idealists, but

not the old brand, blind to the actual, teaching out of a great ignorance. This probation officer woman, she was the modern idealist, as modern as Jesus Christ, who worked in the same spirit.

He would finish his vision-plays, as he called them, because he believed in them. But, in the meantime, he would learn something of the real issues of men and women as they live in great cities, so that he could write a play which would be so true, so vital, that it would be like watching the beating of the hot heart of life. That night was the beginning of a new era for Jarvis.

XVII

BAMBINA PARKHURST was a young woman not much given to wrath, but as she read the two letters from New York she grew thoroughly enraged at Jarvis. Evidently, he had been exceedingly rude to Mr. Strong, and evidently Mr. Strong had been exceedingly annoyed. She was so furious at him that when she sat down to her desk to write her daily chapters no ideas came. Her mind just went over and over the situation of kind Mr. Strong putting himself out to be polite for her sake — Jarvis, stiff and ill-mannered, repulsing him. She determined to omit the daily letter to the offender until she cooled off. She gave up work for the morning and descended upon Ardelia.

"Ardelia, I am so mad I can't think of anything to do but put up fruit."

"Law, Miss Bambi, you ain't mad wif me, is you?"

"No. I'm mad with man."

"Man! Wat's the Perfessor bin doin'? Has he don' forgot somfin'?"

"It isn't the Professor. It's the sex."

"Well, don' you go meddlin' round wid fruit and gettin' yo' hands stained up, jus' caus' yo's mad wid de sex."

"I have got to do something violent, Ardelia. I am going to jerk the stems off of berries, chop the pits out of cherries, and skin peaches."

"Laws a-massy, you suttinly is fierce this mohnin'. All right, go ahead, but der ain't no need of it. I mos' generally always has put up the fruit for the fam'ly wifout no help."

"I know you don't need me, Ardelia, but I need you."

"Well, chile, heah's de fust few bushels ob cherries."

"Bushels? Mercy on us! Are you going to do all those?"

"Yassum. And den some more. Dat's the Perfessor's favourite fruit."

Bambi was promptly enveloped in a huge apron and settled on the back piazza, surrounded with pans and baskets. Ardelia stood by, and handed her things, until she got started.

"Hurry up, and come out, Ardelia. I want you to talk to me and take my mind off of things."

"I'll be 'long, by and by."

"I HAVE GOT TO DO SOMETHING VIOLENT, ARDELIA. I AM GOING TO JERK THE STEMS OFF OF BERRIES, CHOP THE PITS OUT OF CHERRIES, AND SKIN PEACHES"

Bambi held up a bright-red cherry, named it Jarvis, pulled out its stem, cut out its heart, and finally plumped it into her mouth and chewed it viciously. Then she felt better. There was a cool morning breeze lifting the leaves of the big elms, and nodding the hollyhocks' heads. The sound of late summer buzzing and humming, and bird songs, made the back porch a pleasant, placid spot — no place in which to keep rage hot.

Ardelia lumbered out, after a while, to sit near by, her slow movements and her beaming smile far from conducive to a state of excitement.

"Mighty purty out here, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"I reckon Massa Jarvis be mighty glad to be home, a-sittin' here a-seedin' cherries 'longside ob you?"

"Jarvis never did anything so useful. As for being alongside of me, that doesn't interest him at all."

"Yo're suttinly the onlovingest bride and groom I've eber seen. You ain't neber lovin' nor kissin' nor nottin', when I come aroun'."

"Mercy no, Ardelia!"

"I 'low if I was married to such a han'som' man, like Massa Jarvis, I'd be a lovin' ob him all the time."

"Suppose he wouldn't let you?"

"Can't tell me der's a man libin' who wouldn't be crazy fur yo' to lub him, Miss Bambi. Look at dat Mister Strong keeps a-comin' here."

"What about him?" asked Bambi in surprise.

"I see him lookin' at you. I see him."

"Nonsense! He has to look at me to talk with me."

"He don' need to do no talkin', wid his eyes a-workin' like dat."

"You old romancer!"

"Look a-heah, chile, dose cherries fo' to preserve. Dey ain't fo' eatin'. You're eatin' two and puttin' one in de pan."

Bambi made a face at her.

"What is your opinion of men, Ardelia?"

"I tink dey's all right in dey place."

"Where's their place?"

"Out in the kennel wid the dawg!" said Ardelia, shaking with laughter. "All 'cepin' the Perfessor and Massa Jarvis," she added.

"You think they are a lower order, do you?"

"Yassum. I sho' do. Mos' of dem just clutterin' up the earth."

"That's the reason you don't take that Johnson man on for good, is it?"

"Sho'! I ain't a-goin' to cook and wash fo' no

nigger dat ain't got no appreciashun, when I can cook and wash fo' the Perfessor dat know a lady when he sees her."

"But he so infrequently sees her," giggled Bambi, *sotto voce*.

"No, ma'am, I's eatin' my white bread right here, and I knows it. I ain't goin' to experimentify wid no marryin', nor givin' in marriage."

"In your case, I believe you're right. In my own, however, I know that, mad as I am this morning, 'experimentification' is the breath of life to me."

They spent the morning in such peaceful converse. While Bambi may not have added greatly to the cherry-pitting, she rose rested and with a collected mind.

"Ardelia, I thank you for a dose of calm," she said, laying her hand affectionately on the black woman's broad shoulder.

"Law, honey, I done enjoyed your sassiety," she said, laughing and patting her hand.

Within the course of a few days Bambi had an appeal from Jarvis:

"Are you ill? Is anything the matter? Are you merely tired of me that you do not write? Your letters are the only event of my days."

This gave her the chance she wanted.

"You seem to be unaware, my dear Jarvis, that in offering a rude rebuff to Mr. Strong you offended me, since he is my good friend and came to see you at my request. I think you made as poor an impression on him as he did upon you, at the time of your meeting, and it was as a politeness to me that he came to look you up. I think an apology to both of us is rather necessary."

A week elapsed, with no reply. Then came a characteristic answer:

"Dear Bambi: Please find enclosed copy of apology sent Strong to-day. I don't like him, but I have apologized. I also apologize to you. Please don't omit letters any more. They mean a great deal these days."

She pondered this for some time. That Jarvis was going through new and trying experiences she realized. But this human appeal for her letters was so unlike the old Jarvis that she had to read it many times to believe it was actually there.

She wrote him at once, accepting his apology gracefully.

"Can't you come out for a few days' rest here, and go back in time to hear Frohman's verdict? We'd

love to have you, especially the Professor and Ardelia."

He answered that it was impossible to get away now. Later, possibly, he might come. He was grateful for the invitation. He never mentioned how he lived, and she did not ask him. The Professor's check he returned, with a note of thanks, saying he did not need it. The summer went by and fall came to town. Still there was no word of his return.

"My, this is a fat letter from Jarvis! Frohman must have accepted the play!" exclaimed Bambi one morning in September. She opened out the thick, folded paper.

"It's poetry," she added. " 'Songs of the Street.' If he's gone back to poetry, I'm afraid he's lost."

She began to glance through them.

"My dear, I've asked you for coffee twice."

"These are powerful and ugly. Think of Jarvis seeing these things."

"Coffee," reiterated the Professor.

"Yes, yes. You must read these. They're upsetting. I wonder what is happening to Jarvis."

"Is he in trouble?"

"No, he doesn't say so. But there's a new note in these."

"Coffee," repeated the Professor, patiently.

"For goodness' sake, father, stop shouting coffee. You are the epitome of the irritating this morning."

"I always am until I have my coffee."

All day long Bambi thought about Jarvis's "Street Songs." It was not the things themselves. They were crude enough, in spots, but it was the new sense in Jarvis that made him see and understand human suffering. She felt an irresistible impulse to take the next train and go to him. Would he be glad to see her? For the first time she wanted him, eagerly. But the impulse passed, and weeks stretched into months. She worked steadily at the book, which grew apace. She loved every word of it. Sometimes she wondered what would become of her without that work, during this waiting time, while Jarvis was making his career. For, in her mind, she always thought of herself and her writing as a side issue of no moment. Jarvis's work was the big, important thing in her life.

He wrote freely about his work on the other plays, asking her judgment and advice, as he had on "Success." She gave her best thought and closest

attention to the problems he put to her, and he showed the same respect for her decisions.

The six weeks grew into two months, and no answer from the Frohman offices. He wrote her that he went in there every other day, but could get no satisfaction. They always said his play was in the hands of the readers. It had to take its turn.

He finished "The Vision" and offered it to Winthrop Ames, of the Little Theatre. "I am hopeful of this man. I have never seen him, but the theatre is well bred, and, to my surprise, a capable, intelligent secretary received me courteously in the office and promised a quick reading. This augurs well for the man at the head of it, I think."

In reply to her insistence that he must come for Thanksgiving, he told her that he had made a vow that he would never come back to her until he had absolutely succeeded or hopelessly failed. "If you knew how hard it is to keep that resolve you would be kind, and not ask me again," he added.

A little piqued, and yet proud, Bambi reported his decision to the Professor, and began to turn over in her busy mind a plan to carry the mountain to Mohammed, if Christmas found the wanderer still obdurate.

XVIII

JARVIS certainly had matriculated in the school of experience, and he entered in the freshman class. He first wrote a series of articles dealing with the historical development of the drama. He took them to the *Munsey* offices and offered them to Mr. Davis.

"Did you intend these for *Munsey's Magazine?*"

"Yes. I thought possibly —— "

"Ever read a copy of the *Magazine?*"

"No. I think not."

"Well, if you intend to make a business of selling stuff to magazines, young man, it would pay you to study the market. What you are trying to do is to unload coal on a sugar merchant. This stuff belongs in the *Atlantic Monthly*, or some literary magazine."

"Isn't your magazine literary?"

"Certainly not in that sense. We publish a dozen magazines and this kind of thing doesn't fit any of them. We entertain the public — we rarely instruct them."

"I see. I'm obliged to you for your trouble. I'll try the *Atlantic*."

"Bring in some stories, light, entertaining stuff with a snap, and we will take them."

"Thanks! 'Fraid that isn't in my line."

Jarvis went over to the Public Library and deliberately studied the style of stuff used by the various monthly publications, making notes.

For the next few days he worked all day and a good part of the night on things he thought he could sell, according to these notes. Then he began a campaign to peddle them. The *Atlantic* refused his drama articles, and he tried them elsewhere, with no success. The other things were equally a drug on the market. He saved postage by taking them to the editors' offices himself, and calling for them in ten days or so. He always found them ready for him. He took a cheaper room, and got down to one square meal a day. Finally, an opportunity came for him to review some books for a literary supplement of a newspaper. Confident that his luck had changed, he proceeded to demolish three out of the four books assigned to him in the most scathing reviews, whereupon the editor paid him half price and dismissed him.

The week when things reached the lowest ebb he was summoned by a postal from an acquaintance, made during one of his night prowls, an old English cabman. When he arrived at the address indicated he found the old man sick in bed with rheumatism. He wanted Jarvis to drive his hansom for a week, on a percentage, until he could get about again. There was no choice. It was that or the park benches, so Jarvis accepted. Old Hicks fitted, or rather misfitted, him in a faded blue tailed coat and a topper. Jarvis looked like an Otto Cushing cartoon of Apollo in the attire, but he never once thought of that. He hitched up the bony old horse, mounted the box, with full instructions as to traffic rules, and headed for the avenue. He found the new trade amusing. He drove ladies on shopping tours, took nurses and their charges around the Park. He did not notice that his face and manners caused many a customer to stare in astonishment. When one woman said audibly to her companion, "Good heavens! what a handsome creature!" he never dreamed she referred to him.

It was the fourth day of his employment as a cabby when a summons came from the Frohman offices bidding him appear at the theatre at eleven

o'clock on the following day. It was embarrassing. Old Hicks was entirely dependent on what Jarvis brought in at night, and they could neither of them afford to have the cab idle a full day. So he decided to stop at the theatre in the morning, and then deduct his time off duty. Promptly at eleven the cab arrived at the Empire Theatre and Jarvis descended from the box. He gave the boy a cent to hold his horse, although nothing except a bushel of oats could have urged the old bone-rack into motion. Up to the booth window he marched, and presented the letter. The boy inspected the old blue coat, the topper, and the worn gloves.

"Character costume," he grinned: then he opened the letter, and his face changed.

"Excuse me, sir, I'll see if Mr. Frohman will see you."

He was out and back, almost at once, bowing and holding the door open.

"Right ahead, into the private office," he said, importantly. A clerk took charge of our hero at the far door, announcing formally, "Mr. Jarvis Jocelyn, Mr. Frohman."

Jarvis entered the big room and crossed eyes with the man at the far end. What Mr. Frohman saw was

a tall, splendidly set-up youth, with a head held high, and a fearless, free carriage, attired in the very strange and battered habiliments of a cabby. What Jarvis saw was a fat little man, with a round face, sharp, twinkling eyes, and a genial mouth. The whole face had a humorous cast, a kindly expression.

"You are Jarvis Jocelyn?" said Mr. Frohman, as Jarvis reached him.

"I am."

"You wrote a play called 'Success'?"

"I did."

"I've read your play."

"That's good."

"Well, the play isn't," Frohman interrupted. "It is extremely bad, but there are some ideas in it, and one good part."

"The woman, you mean?"

"The woman nothing. She's a wooden peg to hang your ideas on. I mean the man she married."

"But he is so unimportant," Jarvis protested.

"He was important enough to get this interview. I never would have bothered with you, or with your play, if it hadn't been for that character. He's new."

"You want me to make him a bigger part in the play?"

"My advice is to throw this play in the waste-basket and write one about that man."

"Will you produce it if I do?"

"Probably not, but I'll look it over. What else have you done?"

"I have finished two things. One I call 'The Vision' — this is a Brotherhood of Man play — the other I call 'Peace,' and it's a dramatization of the Universal Peace idea."

"Why don't you write something human? Nobody wants dramatized movements. The public wants people, personalities, things we all know and feel. You can't get much thrill out of Universal Peace."

"But I believe the public should be taught."

"Yes, I know. I get all of you 'uplift boys' sooner or later. Teach them all you like, but learn your trade so thoroughly that they will have no idea that they are being taught. That is the function of the artist-playwright. What do you do besides write plays?"

"Just at present I drive a cab," Jarvis answered simply.

"You don't say? How does that happen?"

"I was up against it for money, and I took this to oblige a friend cabby who has rheumatism."

"'Pon my word! How long have you been at it?"

"This is my fifth day."

"Business good?" The manager's eyes twinkled. Jarvis smiled gravely.

"I have been wishing it would rain," he confessed.

"When do you write?"

"At night, now. But this is only temporarily."

"What do you think of my idea of another play?"

"The idea is all right, if you will only take it when I've done it."

"How long have you been at this playwriting?"

"Three years."

"How long do you suppose it took me to learn to be a manager?"

"I don't know."

"Well, nearer three times ten than three years, and I am still learning. You writing fellows never want to learn your trade like other people. You talk about inspiration and uplifting the public, and all that, and you want to do it in six months. You go to work on this new idea, and come back here when you've finished it. Then it will be time enough to talk about my end of it."

Jarvis rose.

"I am obliged to you, sir. I shall do it."

HE TAUGHT HIMSELF TO ABANDON HIS OLD INTROSPECTIVE HABITS
DURING THESE DAYS ON THE BOX

Mr. Frohman held out his hand. "Good luck to you. I shall hope for rain."

"Thanks! Good morning, sir."

With the perfect ease of a lack of self-consciousness Jarvis made his exit, leaving Mr. Frohman with a twinkle in his eyes.

The rest of the day a certain blond cabman on the avenue drove to Franklin Simon's when he was ordered to Altman's, drew up in state at McCreery's when he was told Bonwit Teller's.

"You must be drunk, driver," said one passenger. She held up her dollar bill, indignantly, to dismiss him. He lifted his hat, perfunctorily, and swept a bow.

"I am, madam, intoxicated with my own thoughts." He rattled off down the street, leaving the woman rooted to the curb with astonishment.

He taught himself to abandon his old, introspective habits during these days on the box, and forced his attention to fix itself upon the crowds, his customers, the whole uptown panorama, so different from the night crowds he sought. He recalled Bambi's saying to him that until he learned not to exclude any of the picture he would never do big work. Her words had a tantalizing way of coming back to

him, things she had tossed off in the long ago of their visit to New York together. He longed for her vivid phrasing, her quick dart at the heart of the things they talked of. It seemed incredible now that he had ever taken her as a matter of course. As for the enigma of her marrying him, he never ceased to ponder it.

True to his promise, he went to call on the "Probation Lady," as he named her, and they became friends. He admired her enormously, and owed much to her wise philosophy. He asked her to go riding in his cab, and she accepted without hesitation. They rode from five to seven, one afternoon, conversing through the shutter in the top of the cab, laughing and enjoying themselves hugely, to the great amusement of pedestrians along the way.

At the end of two weeks he and Hicks divided the spoils, and Hicks resumed the box. It cemented a friendship which Jarvis enjoyed greatly, for the old Englishman was ripe with humour and experience. He, too, taught the teacher.

The day after he was free from cab duty Jarvis went to the Little Theatre to get a report from "The Vision." The secretary said Mr. Ames had asked to see him when he came in. He found him a lean

student type of man, finished in manner, and pleasant of speech.

"I have been interested in this play of yours, Mr. Jocelyn. I couldn't do it, in my theatre, but I thought I would like to have a talk with you and ask you what else you've done."

"A woman-question play, called 'Success,' this one, and one on Universal Peace."

"All serious?"

"Certainly. Why do managers always ask that?"

"Because serious plays are so many, I suppose. Good comedies are so few."

"I thought you always gave serious things in the Little Theatre?"

"I am forced to, but I am always looking for good comedy. I would like to see your other plays."

They sat, discussing things of the theatre, tendencies in drama, fashions and fads, Gordon Craig's book, the Rheinhardt idea. They spent a pleasant half hour, like an oasis in Jarvis's desert. He felt that Mr. Ames had time for him, was sincere in his interest in him. He left the Little Theatre cheered in some inexplicable way.

When he returned to his lodgings that day he found a note from Strong, forwarded from the old

address. It acknowledged Jarvis's apology gracefully, and suggested that they dine together the night of this very day, unless Jarvis was again engaged, in which case he might telephone, and they would make other plans. Jarvis frowned over it ten minutes.

"Might as well go and get it over," he remarked ungraciously. He telephoned Strong his acceptance, and asked if he might meet him at the restaurant. He did not wish Strong to know the new address. He would keep his struggle and his poverty to himself. That was certain.

The two men met at a roof garden, each determined to suppress his instinctive dislike of the other because of Bambi. They found a table, and after a short period of stiffness they fell into easy talk of books and plays and men.

"How do you like New York? I remember you confessed to hating cities when I saw you."

"I still hate cities, but I am getting a new point of view about it all."

"It's a great school."

"So it is."

"Is Mrs. Jocelyn well, and the Professor?"

"Yes, thank you."

"It is some time since you were home?"

"Yes."

"I had a note from Mrs. Jocelyn a few days ago."

"Did you?"

"I wonder if you would let me see your 'Songs of the Street,' she told me about?"

"She spoke of them to you?"

"In the highest terms. Said she had no idea of your plans in regard to them, but that the poems were strong and true."

"I am glad she liked them."

"Would you consider letting me have them for the magazine if they seemed to fit our needs?"

"You can look them over, if you like. They won't fit, though. They'll stick out like a sore thumb. The only editor I showed them to said they weren't prose, and they weren't poetry, and, besides, he didn't like them."

"Mail them to me to-night when you go home. Better still, bring them in."

Jarvis drew out an envelope that he pushed across the table to Strong.

"Look them over now," he said.

Strong lifted his brows slightly, but took the proffered pages and began to read. While his host was

so busied, Jarvis smoked a good cigar, the first in months, and enjoyed it. He didn't care whether Strong liked them or not. Strong looked up suddenly.

"I'll take these, Jocelyn. What do you want for them?"

"Oh, I don't know. What are they worth to you?"

"I'll pay two hundred dollars for them. Is that satisfactory?"

"Perfectly."

"I'll mail you a check in the morning. I should say you have been learning things, Jocelyn. That is good stuff."

"I told you I was getting a new point of view."

At the close of the evening the two men parted with a surreptitious feeling that they would have liked each other under any other circumstances. They promised to meet soon again. As for Jarvis, he felt that a golden egg had been laid for him in the middle of the table on the Astor roof! The one thing that stood out in his mind was the thought that he could go home — home, to see Bambi. The only regret was that Strong had made it possible.

XIX

THE day came, in early December, when Bambi put the last word, the last period, to her book. Instead of a moment of high relief and of pride, as she had foreseen it, it was with a sigh of regret that she laid down her pen. She felt as a mother might feel who sends her child out to make its own way when she had put her last, finishing mother-touch upon his training. There would never be another first book. No matter how crude or how young this firstling might come to seem to her, there would never be such another. No such thrills, no such building as made this first-born dear, could go in another book. Then there was the pleasure in her new bank account, with the sense of freedom it brought. She could indulge herself in pretty things. She could buy little presents for people she loved. Best of all, she laid aside an amount which she called the "Homeseeker's Fund," to be used for that home which she and Jarvis would establish some day. She had won her independence, and it was sweet.

Mr. Strong was attending to the publication of the story in book form. And it was to be on the Christmas stalls, appearing simultaneously with the last chapters of the magazine. He was already begging her to promise a new serial for the coming year.

It seemed incredible that so much could have happened to her in the ten months that she had been married to Jarvis. Her threatened career, which seemed such a joke to her family, was here; she was well launched upon it, with the two scoffers still in ignorance of the fact. So she mused, as she sat at her desk, the heap of completed last chapters piled before her. Ardelia broke in upon her meditations.

"Mr. Strong in here!"

"Who?"

"Mr. Strong!"

"Mr. Strong! Why, he sent me no word. I didn't expect him!"

"I can't help that. He's here, settin' in the liberry."

"Dear me!" said Bambi. "Say I'll be down at once. Wait! Help me to get into my gray gown before you go."

"You look all right de way you is."

"No, no. This man lives in New York, Ardelia. He's used to real clothes."

"I wish he'd stay in New York."

"What's the matter with Mr. Strong? I thought you liked him!"

"He's gettin' too frequentious round here, to suit me."

"You silly thing, we have business to talk over. Hurry on, now, and say I'll be down in a minute."

Ardelia lumbered out, disapproval in every inch of her back.

Richard Strong turned away from the log fire at the sound of Bambi's footsteps running down the stairs. The soft gray gown clung to her, and floated behind her, its ashen monotone making her face more vivid than ever. Her cheeks were pink, and her eyes looked gray-green in the shadowy room, with the deep, shining fire of opals. Both hands went out to his in impulsive greeting.

"Welcome!" she said, smiling.

"Aren't you surprised?"

"I'm pleased. Why should I be surprised?"

"It is so unheard of, for me to be running out of town on unexpected visits to a lady, that it seems as if everybody must be as surprised as I am."

"The lady was thinking of you when your name was announced, which may account for her non-surprise."

"Really?" he said so warmly that she blushed a bit.

"Yes, I finished the book to-day. I was thinking it all over — this last year. My new sense of getting somewhere, and of you — the big part you play in it all. Have I ever told you how utterly grateful I am?"

He looked down at her, sunk among the cushions of the big couch, before replying.

"I think you need not say it," he replied. "I have been so richly rewarded in knowing you."

"Thanks, friend."

"You've been my secret garden this last year."

"Oh, that is nice of you," she interrupted, sensing an undercurrent of feeling. "If I am your secret garden, you're my secret well, because nobody knows about us."

"You haven't told them yet?"

"No. When the book comes out I shall give them each a copy, and run and hide while they read it."

"Little girl," he smiled at her, "what do you think brought me down here to-day?"

"No idea."

"Guess."

"Can't. Never guessed anything in my life."

He took a letter from his pocket and handed it to her.

"I am to read this?"

He nodded. She opened it and read:

"*Mr. Richard Strong, New York City.*

"My Dear Mr. Strong: I have read, with very great interest, a serial story, published in your magazine, entitled 'Francesca.' I feel that there is the making of a delightful comedy in the plot of this novel, and I write to ask you whether it would be possible for me to secure the dramatic rights from the author. As the story is anonymous, I appeal to you to put me in touch with the writer in question. I shall appreciate an immediate reply.

"With thanks to you, in advance, Sincerely,

"Charles Frohman,

"Empire Theatre, New York City."

"Am I dreaming this? Does this mean my book?"

He smiled at her earnestness.

"It does. I came down to talk it over with you and see what you wanted me to do."

"What do you think about it, yourself?"

"I think it's a great idea. It will advertise the book enormously. The book will help the play. In the meantime, they both advertise you."

"A play made of my thoughts? It's too wonder-

ful," said Bambi. "Do you suppose he'd let me make the play?"

"I don't know. Would you like to? Do you think you could?"

"I do. I've learned lots through ——" She stopped of a sudden, and gazed at him. "Why, Jarvis must make the play, of course. Why didn't I think of it?"

"Mr. Frohman would, no doubt, wish to choose the playwright, in case you didn't make the dramatic version yourself."

"But why couldn't Jarvis?"

"Jarvis is totally unknown, you know, and so far unsuccessful in playmaking. You could hardly expect Mr. Frohman to risk a tyro."

She looked at him indignantly. He rated Jarvis like a Dun's Agency.

"But I'm a tyro. Yet you think he might let me do it?"

"Excuse me, you are not a tyro. You are the author of one of the season's most-talked-of books. Your name, in a double rôle, on Mr. Frohman's three-sheets, will be a fine card."

"All I know about playwriting I learned from Jarvis," she protested.

"Well, I didn't come to argue about Jarvis's ability or accomplishment, you know. Do you wish me to tell Frohman who you are, or will you come to town and see him yourself?"

"I'd love to go see him. Isn't this exciting?" she cried, as the full force of what she was saying came to her. "Oh, it's fun to do things, and be somebody, isn't it?"

"I don't know. I never tried it."

"You! How absurd! Distinguished you, saying that to a nouveau like me, when there would have been no me except for you."

"That's complicated, but delightful of you, no matter how untrue it is."

"It is true. If you hadn't happened to like the first story I happened to write, we would never be here discussing my first play, which Mr. Frohman happens to want. It's all you."

Mr. Strong suddenly leaned over her, so that she felt his breath on her hair.

"Francesca, if it only were all me," he said with unexpected passion. She looked up at him, frightened, amazed.

"Oh, you mustn't do that!" she breathed. He straightened up at once.

"You're right. I beg your pardon. 'Twas just a slip."

He took a turn up and down the room, and when he came back to the hearth rug he spoke in his usual matter-of-fact way.

"I am to make an appointment, then, for you, with Mr. Frohman, at his office?"

"If you will," she answered gratefully.

"When will you come to New York?"

"Any day you can get the appointment. The sooner the better."

"All right." He looked at his watch. "I must get that 5:40 back to New York."

"Oh, you'll stay to dinner, and spend the night?"

"No, thanks. I must get back."

"But the Professor will never forgive me."

"You must make a good case for me. I really must go."

She rose to give him her hand.

"It was so good of you to come with this wonderful news, that 'thank you' is inadequate."

"I thought we had agreed not to say 'thank you' to each other."

"You never have any occasion to say it to me," she smiled ruefully.

"Haven't I? I think you don't know ——" She interrupted him nervously.

"Friends don't need thank-yous. We will discard them."

"Good! Can I be of service in getting you to Mr. Frohman's office?"

"Oh, no. Jarvis will take me."

"To be sure. For the moment I had forgotten Jarvis."

"I'll telephone you when I go to town, and find out about my plans."

"Thank you."

He took her hand and held it a moment.

"Forgive me when I seem a bad friend. Trust me."

"I do, Richard, I do."

"Oh, thank you. May I say Francesca?"

"If you like. No one ever calls me by that name."

"That's why I choose it. Good-bye. My regards to the father."

"Good-bye, friend. I'm ecstatic over your news."

"So am I over any news that brings you happiness. Good night."

After he left she sank down on the couch again, her brain awhirl of her new sensations and ideas. That

Richard Strong had learned to care for her, during these months of intimate association over the story, came with as great a surprise as the astonishing demand of Mr. Frohman. Her own thoughts had been so free of sentiment in regard to him; she went over every step of their advancing friendship, asking herself how much she was to blame for his outburst. She had only exerted her wiles for histrionic purposes on the occasion of his first visit. He certainly could not have misunderstood her intentions, then, when she had deliberately explained them to him. After close examination she exonerated herself.

Then, and only then, was she free to indulge her thoughts in the joyous news he had brought her. Chin on hand, before the fire, she worked it out. She and Jarvis would write the play together, together they would go through all the exciting stages of rehearsal and trying out, together they would make their bow before the curtain and their first-night's speech. She decided what kind of frock she would wear. It was all picturesque and successful. She never faced the possibility of failure. Jarvis's name would be made as a playwright. At the thought that she was to bring him his opportunity at last, she flushed and smiled, though her eyes misted.

Then she began to plan how she would tell it to Jarvis, the story of her adventuring into the new field, her swift success, and now this last laurel leaf. Suddenly a new idea lifted its head. Suppose Jarvis refused to come into his own, under her mantle, as it were? He would be proud and glad for her, of course, but maybe he would resent taking his first chance from her hands. With knitted brow she pondered that for some time. The more she thought of it, the more convinced she became that even though he accepted it, and showed gratitude, deep down in his heart would be the feeling that he would be only contributing to her success, that was in no way his own. Long she sat, and finally she laughed, nodded her head, and clapped her hands.

"Oh, yes, that's the way!" said she.

The Professor came in upon her at this point.

"Are you saying an incantation, my dear?"

"No, offering thanks to the gods."

"For what?"

"For the most unconscionable luck."

"In what form, may I ask?"

"Look at me!" she ordered.

He fixed his faded eyes on her closely.

"I see you."

"See how pretty I am?"

"You're not bad-looking."

"Bad-looking? I'm extremely near to being a beauty. Look at the father I have — distinguished, delightful!"

"Oh, my dear!"

"Look at the husband the gods gave me!"

"Yes, your long-distance husband."

"Look at Ardelia! Who ever heard of such a cook? Consider my brains."

"There, I grant you."

"Besides that, I am the sole possessor of a secret which is too perfectly delicious to be true."

"Do you intend to tell this secret to me?"

"Yes, as soon as it is ripe."

She caught his hands and whirled him about.

"Oh, Professor, Professor, you ought to be very glad that you are related to me!"

"Bambina, one moment. I dislike being jerked around like a live jumping-jack."

"It's evident I didn't get my dancing talents from you, old centipede. Sit down, and I'll dance a joy dance."

She pushed him on the couch, and began a wild, fantastic dance on the hearth rug before him, the

firelight flashing through the thin, gray draperies. Even the Professor breathed a little faster as the lithe figure swayed and bent and curved into wonderful lines, which melted ever into new ones. It was young, elemental joy, every step of it; sexless, no Bacchante dance, but rather a pæon of ecstasy, such as a dryad might have danced in the woods. At the climax she stood poised, her arms lifted in exultation. Then she dropped beside him.

"My child!" he exclaimed. "That was most extraordinary! Where did you learn it?"

"Ages back, when I lived in a tree."

"It must be a happy secret to make you dance like that."

"Oh," said she, snuggling up to him, putting her head on his shoulder, "it is the gayest, pleasantest, hopefulest secret a girl ever had. If I don't hold my hands over my mouth, it will break out of me."

"Does Jarvis know?"

"Oats, peas, beans, and barley grows,
You, nor he, nor nobody knows!"

she laughed. "It's going to be the most amusing

moment of my life when I spring it on the two of you."

"When is that to be?"

"Curiosity is death to mathematicians," she warned him, nor could he extract another word from behind the hand she held over her laughing mouth.

XX

APPOINTMENT at three o'clock, Tuesday afternoon," announced Strong's wire on Monday morning.

"Hurray!" shouted Bambi, rushing into the kitchen to break the news to Ardelia, since the Professor was not there.

"Noo Yawk, bress yo'! Ain't dat fine? Yo' gwine see Mistah Jarvis?"

"Of course I'll see him."

"Yo' can tote him back home, mebbe."

"I'll take the early morning train to-morrow."

"I reckon I'll fry up some chicken an' bake some cakes, so yo' can tote it right along wid yo'."

"Now, look here, Ardelia. I'm not going to pack any basket along on the train to New York. Jarvis can buy his fried chicken there."

"He say dey ain't no cookin' lak' dere is in dis town."

"Well, it will have to do for a little longer. I'll have my bag and plenty to carry."

"Yo' ain't got no nat'chal feelin' fo' dat boy," Ardelia scolded her.

When the Professor heard the news he evinced a mild surprise.

"Have you any money for this trip? I'm a trifle short, now. The bank notified me yesterday that I was overdrawn."

"Professor, not again? What is the use of being a mathematician if you are always overdrawn?"

"The trouble is I forget to look at my balance. I just continue to draw until I am notified. You will see Jarvis, of course?"

"Yes."

"You say you have business to attend to in the city?"

"Yes."

"About the secret?"

"Yes."

"Is the moment of disclosure approaching?"

She nodded.

"Well, I wish you the best of luck, my dear."

"Thanks, Herr Professor."

She took the early train in high good humour the next morning, clad in her most fetching frock.

"Even a stony-hearted manager could not be

impervious to this hat," was her parting comment to her glass.

She was very undecided as to whether she would go straight to Jarvis's lodgings and surprise him, or wait until after the interview with Frohman. She finally decided that she could not wait until four o'clock, but that she would give Jarvis no hint of the coming momentous appointment. As she came into the city, she noted the bright, crisp winter day with pleasure — very different from that spring day when she and Jarvis had entered the gates together. But to-day was to-day and she was glad of it.

She took a taxi, with that sense of affluence which attacks one like a germ on entering the City of Spenders. The driver looked at her again as she gave the address. The trim, smart little figure did not look much like the neighbourhood she was headed for. Probably one of these settlement workers, he decided.

At first Bambi did not notice where she was going, so happy was she to be back in this gay city.

"I know you're a Painted Lady, but you're so pretty!" she smiled, as the streets ran by. Downtown and still downtown the taxi sped, past the

Washington Square district, which they had explored together, shooting off at a tangent into the kind of neighbourhood where Bambi had fallen sick at the sights and the filth. They drew up before an old-fashioned house, with dirty steps and windows and curtains. It looked like a better-class citizen on the down grade, beside the neighbouring houses, which were frankly low-class. The driver opened the door and Bambi stared up at the place.

"Why, this can't be it!" she exclaimed.

"This is the number you gave me."

"Wait," she said. She ran up the rickety steps, her heart sick with fear. She rang and waited and rang. Finally, a dirty head appeared out of an upstairs window.

"What d'yer want?" a voice demanded.

"Does Mr. Jarvis Jocelyn live here?"

"Three flights up-back," and the window slammed.

"Wait for me, driver," she called. She began to climb the dirty stairs, tears in her eyes.

"Oh, my dear, my dear!" she said, over and over again.

She knocked at the third-floor back, with no response; so she opened the door and entered. One dark area window, a bed, a chair, a dresser, an im-

provised table with piles of manuscript. It was cleaner than the awful entrance suggested. But, oh, it was pitiful! Such a place for a dreamer! Bambi leaned her head on the dresser and sobbed. That he had been reduced to this, that he had never told them, that he had refused the Professor's money and chosen poverty! It nearly killed her, while it thrilled her with a pride unspeakable. If he had the strength for such a fight, nothing could conquer him. She started at a step outside, thinking that it might be he.

Suddenly she realized that he might not want even her to see this; that he might not want her to know of this drab tent where he crawled for sleep off the field of battle. She went to the narrow bed and laid her hand gently where his cheek would rest.

"Jarvis, my dear!" she whispered.

Then she went down the rickety stairs, out to the waiting cab. She was sick, heart and body, at the revelation of what his struggle meant. All the mother in her cried out at the physical distress of such surroundings to a nature sensitive to environment.

He could have come back to the sunny, airy rooms he had made his, at home; but he had chosen to stay and win. So many things she had not understood about him were made clear now, and she wondered if

Richard Strong had found him there. No wonder Jarvis had repulsed him, taken unawares, and at such a disadvantage!

"Oh, why didn't you let me know and help?" she repeated. She had the man take her round and round the Park, where it was quiet. She must get herself in hand. She felt that at the slightest excuse she would burst into hysterics! More than ever, now, must she be mistress of herself for the coming interview. She must fight to catch the big manager's attention, and win her way with him. She drew her furs about her, closed her eyes, and tried to shut out the sight of that sordid, wretched room, where handsome big Jarvis was paying the toll to success — toll of blood and brain and nerves, paid by every man or woman who mounts to the top! She saw him climbing wearily those dirty stairs, coming into the cell. Over and over she saw it, like a moving-picture film repeated indefinitely.

At quarter before three she ordered the driver to the Empire Theatre. This time his face cleared. Actress, of course. Probably went to the slums to look up a drunken husband. He drew up at the theatre, demanded a queen's ransom for her release, and stood at attention. She was too nervous to notice

the amount, and paid it absently, dismissed him, and hurried to the elevator.

She was first shown into the general-domo's office, where she was catechised as to her name and her business. She waited fifteen minutes while her name was passed down the line. Word came back that Mr. Frohman was engaged. Would she please wait?

"I'll wait, but my appointment was at three," she said.

The major-domo looked at her as if such *lèse majesté* deserved hanging. In fifteen minutes more she was conducted into an anteroom, where she was turned over to a secretary. Her business was explained to him. In due course of time word came out that Mr. Frohman would be through in ten minutes. She was moved, then, to a tiny room next the sacred door leading into the inner mystery. Twenty minutes passed, then a youth appeared.

"Mr. Frohman will receive you now," he announced in solemn tones.

Bambi refrained from an impulse to say, "Thank you, St. Peter," and followed into the private office. For a second she was petrified with fear, then with the courage of the terror-stricken she marched down the

long room to the desk where Mr. Frohman sat looking at her.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," said he.

Bambi fixed her shining eyes upon him and smiled confidently.

"I feel as if I'd gotten into the Kingdom of Heaven for a short talk with God!"

The smile on the manager's face broke into a laugh.

"Is it as bad as that? Sit down and see how you like it up here?"

"Thanks," she said, sinking into the big chair beside the desk.

"So you wrote 'Francesca,' did you?"

"I did."

"You look pretty young to know as much about life as that book tells."

"Oh, I'm old in experience," she boasted.

He looked closely at her ingenuous face, and laughed again.

"You don't look it. I think there's a play in that book."

"So do I."

"Did you ever write a play?"

"No, but I've helped on several plays. I know a great deal about them," she assured him.

"Do you? Well, that's more than I do. Any of the plays that you have helped on been produced?"

"That isn't fair of you," she protested. "I should have boasted about it if they had."

"A skilled playwright could take the heart of your story and build up a clever comedy."

"Could we have Richard Bennett, Marguerite Clarke, and Albert Bruning play the parts?"

"Oh, ho, you've got it all cast, have you?"

She nodded.

"And I know just the man to make the play."

"Do you? So do I. Whom do you choose?"

"Jarvis Jocelyn."

"Jarvis Jocelyn? Who's he?"

"He's a young playwright. He hasn't had anything produced yet, but he's extremely clever, and I do so want him to have the chance."

"Jarvis Jocelyn! Seems as though I had heard that name. Oh, your name is Jocelyn," he added. "Is this a relative?"

"Sort of — husband."

"Husband? So you're married?" in surprise.

"Yes. If you don't mind, I think I'll have to tell you some personal history."

"Go ahead. I wish I could think where I had heard that fellow's name."

"He submitted a play to you, called 'Success.'"

"What — the cab-driver? You mean to say you're married to the cab-driver?"

"Cab-driver?"

"The 'Success' fellow came in here, in a long coat and a top hat. Said he was driving a hansom to help a friend and incidentally turn a penny himself. Big, handsome, blond fellow. I remember, I liked him."

Surprise, pain, then understanding, flashed across her face, and somehow the manager knew that he had betrayed a secret to her and that it hurt. She controlled herself quickly, and answered him.

"Yes, that was Jarvis. We were married last spring, and we both set out on a career. I kept mine a secret, and just by luck I succeeded. But Jarvis" — here her eyes filled with tears — "you've no idea how hard it is to be a playwright! Everybody thinks what a snap it is to collect royalties when you are a Broadway favourite, but they don't know all those terrible days and nights before you get there, and what it means if you never do get there."

"I know," he nodded. "So you want to give this fellow the chance to make this play?"

"I want to more than I ever wanted anything in my life."

"Well, well!" he said, in surprise at her earnestness.

"I want you to send for him, give him the commission, and never mention me."

"Why not?"

"I do not want him to know that I had anything to do with it."

"He doesn't know you wrote the book?"

"No."

"And you're married to him, you say?"

She nodded.

"Upon my word, you're a queer pair! Are you Francesca, and is he the musician of the story?"

"Well, they are based on us, rather."

He laughed.

"Dear, kind Mr. Frohman, will you do this?"

"I told the fellow to try his hand at a comedy. He might handle this, if we could hold him down. Awful preacher, isn't he?"

"He's young," she answered patronizingly. The manager covered a smile.

"Won't he recognize himself and you in the book?"

"I think not. He's so unobserving, and he does not suspect me at all. He'll never know."

"You may have to work with him on the play."

"Oh, he'll appeal to me for help. He always does. We will do it together, only he will not know about the author."

"You will have to come to rehearsals."

"I'll come as wife of the playwright, or co-author."

"You've got it all thought out, haven't you?"

"I have."

"Sounds like a farce plot to me. Give me my instructions again. You want me to send for him, tell him to make a play out of this book ——"

She smiled and nodded.

"Suppose he asks me who the author is?"

"You could say that she insisted upon preserving her anonymity."

"What else do I do?"

"That's all."

"If this is your idea of a short interview with God, you certainly make good in dictating his policy to him!"

Bambi's laughter rippled and sang.

"But you will do it?"

"I'll make a start by calling the cabby."

She rose and held out her hand.

"I'm so glad you're like this," she said. "I shall love doing things with you."

"Much obliged. I'm glad you came in. You'll probably hear from one of us as to the next move in the matter. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye and thanks, Mr. God."

His laugh followed her out. He sat for several minutes thinking about her and her plan. He recalled Jarvis's fine, unconscious exit at the time of his interview. He rang for a boy, and demanded Jarvis's address.

Bambi walked out, treading on air. She had won her point. She had got Jarvis his chance. She thought it all out — the coming of Frohman's letter, his joy over the commission, how he would announce it to her. She laughed aloud, so that several people turned to look at her and a man slowed up and fell in step.

She went into a tea-shop to have tea, calm down, and decide on the next step. Would she stay overnight, summoning Jarvis to meet her next day, or should she go home on the night train and not see him at all? Could she bear to see his face with the imprint of poverty and discouragement? He had been so reduced as to be forced to drive a cab, she

might even meet him on the avenue! No, she would go home to-night, and let Jarvis come to her with news of his victory.

So she surprised the Professor at breakfast.

"Morning!" she cried.

"Bambi! We didn't expect you so soon."

"I finished what I had to do, so here I am."

"And Jarvis?"

"Oh, he's well."

"Was he surprised to see you?"

"Very."

"Is he getting on?"

"Slowly. But he will win."

"If he can learn to be practical ——"

"He's learning," said Bambi, grimly.

"When is he coming home?"

"He did not say."

"Nobody buys his plays yet?"

"Not yet."

"I'm not surprised. That woman, you know, in the play he read us ——"

"Don't talk about her till I get my breakfast."

He looked at her in surprise, she was so seldom irritated. She rang for Ardelia.

"Why, Miss Bambi, honey! I didn't see yo' all comin'."

"Here I am, and hungry, too."

"How's Mistah Jarvis?"

"All right. Breakfast, Ardelia, I perish."

"Did you have a successful trip?" inquired her father.

"I did, very."

"How did you find Babylon?"

"As Babylonish as ever."

She seemed strangely disinclined for conversation, so her wise parent left her to her meditations and her breakfast. But he patted her as he passed to go out.

"We're glad to have you back, my daughter."

She brushed his cheek with her lips, understandingly.

XXI

"GOD'S in his heaven! All's right with the world!" carrolled Bambi gayly the next day.

She wrote Mr. Strong of her interview with Mr. Frohman and its happy outcome. It gave her some satisfaction to announce that the manager was willing to entrust Jarvis with the play. She explained that she was obliged to come home on the night train, so she had missed the pleasure of seeing him. Would he see that Mr. Frohman had the first bound copy of the book?

She added that she was happy, but it was superfluous. It sang itself through the note, so that Strong patted the paper, as he finished it, as if it were a personal belonging of the sender.

The letter finished, she mounted the stairs to Jarvis's house, as she always called the top floor. She wandered about, comparing it with that place of confinement where he now dwelt. To-day he would

write or telegraph to her his news, if he had the interview with Frohman.

She began work on the play, up in his study. She outlined the main plot, marked scenes in the book she thought vital, scraps of conversation which would be effective. She planned the sets for the different acts, even deciding upon Francesca's clothes. Ever and anon, in the midst of her happy scheming, she fell to dreaming of the days to come, with Jarvis home again, and their work together resumed.

Whenever the doorbell rang she stopped and waited for Ardelia's heavy foot upon the stairs as she toiled up with the telegram or special delivery. But the morning passed, plus half the afternoon, with no word from him. She went down to the post-office herself in the hope that the late mail would reward her. There was nothing for her.

The next day brought only a note from Strong congratulating her enthusiastically, and prophesying a great success for the Jocelyn family. She spent a restless day waiting for the postman, afraid to leave the house for fear she would miss a wire. She grew so nervous that she scolded Ardelia and fussed at the Professor. Night found her entirely discouraged. Something had happened. Frohman had

changed his mind, or Jarvis had refused. She had known all along that it was too good to be true. She tossed all night, sleepless, her mind running around like a squirrel in a trap, planning another trip to see the manager.

The early morning found her pacing the paths of the frostbitten garden, where the Professor found her later.

"Why, good morning, Bambi mia," said he, in surprise.

"Good day, Herr Vater!"

"What brings you forth so early, lady-bird?"

"My hateful thoughts! Oh, daddy, there's a crick in the secret."

"A crick? Dear me, what a pity!"

"If it doesn't get itself straightened out to-day, I shall go to New York again, to see what I can do."

"The companionship of a secret is often corruptive to good habits, such as sleep and appetite. Better tell me this mystery."

"If it isn't settled to-day, I will tell you."

"Very good."

"These late asters are hardy things?"

"Yes. The rest of the poor beds are full of ghosts."

"Ghosts always stalk, don't they?"

He looked at her in concern. "You are upset," he said, and they both laughed.

She followed him about for an hour, talking, watching his exact, methodical movements. The early morning air was keen, in spite of the sun. When the postman appeared on the block she ran to the gate to meet him. He was an old friend, on the route ever since she could remember.

"Hello, Miss Bambi, you're early this morning," he called.

"I couldn't sleep for my sins. If you don't give me a letter, Mr. Ben, I'll scream."

"Go ahead!"

"You mean ——"

He laughed at her discomfited face and handed her the letter. A quick glance showed the Empire Theatre in one corner. She blew him a kiss on her finger tips.

"I knew you wouldn't disappoint me, dear Mr. Ben. That's it!"

"I tell you I'm a regular little Cupid. Don't know what the girls in this town would do without me," he laughed, as he trudged away. Bambi read:

"My Dear Mrs. Jocelyn: It gives me pleasure

to announce that Mr. Jarvis Jocelyn has almost agreed to accept the commission. I think he feels that it is condescension on his part, but he accepts conditionally. He carried off the copies of the magazine to read your story, and he is to give me his answer to-day. As I am sure of a favourable one, I think we may consider the matter settled.

"Hoping that this meets with your entire approval,

"I am, faithfully,

"CHARLES FROHMAN.

"P. S. I told him that I understood the author was an unhappy wife, who desired to be unknown."

The Professor looked up as Bambi pirouetted around the beds, waving a fluttering white sheet in good melodrama style.

"This letter that I longed for, it has came!" she sang, lifting a pointed toe over the top of a withered sunflower stalk.

"My dear, that ballet step is a trifle exaggerated for a lady!"

"The sunflower's dead, so it couldn't be shocked. The secret is working fine. Oh, I'm so happy, I'm so happy!" she trilled, and whirled off toward the house.

"If you are still thinking of a career, why not a whirling dervish?" called her father.

She stopped, and turned to him.

"Career? Career, did you say, for stupid little me?"

"I never called you stupid," he protested.

"I should hope not. I'm the smartest child you ever had!" she cried as a period to their discourse.

All day she waited for word from Jarvis and none came. She could have cried with disappointment. Could he have been insane enough to refuse, after he had read the story? Or did he think she was indifferent to his good fortune? She went to bed determined to write him on the morrow.

The morning mail brought a second letter from the Empire Theatre. It contained a line from Mr. Frohman, "He accepts," and an enclosure. This proved to be a letter from Jarvis:

"*To the Author of 'Francesca,' care of Mr. Frohman, Empire Theatre, New York.*

"My Dear Madam: Mr. Charles Frohman has given me your story 'Francesca' to read, with a view to making it into a play. Of course you are familiar with his plans in this respect. He has offered to entrust me with the dramatization, and I have consented to accept, on the condition that both you and he will allow me to use my own discretion in the work, and not hamper me by superimposing your own ideas and desires. When I have finished all I can do with

it, I will then try to incorporate any ideas you may have in the final version.

"I think the story very charming, the characters interesting. The part of the musician seems to me rather fantastic, but I suppose there are such men. The girl, Francesca, is delightful; the old fiddler, a fine study.

"You are to be congratulated on your work, and I trust I may be able to make as good a play as you have made a book.

"Very truly yours,

"JARVIS JOCELYN."

Bambi chuckled as she read, and patted the part which praised her. Whatever else had happened, Jarvis's dignity was still intact. He calmly told the author to keep her hands off her own book!

She flew to the typewriter to answer him.

"*Mr. Jarvis Jocelyn, care of Mr. Charles Frohman, Empire Theatre, New York.*

"MY DEAR MR. JOCELYN: Your letter in regard to the dramatization of my book, 'Francesca,' seems to demand immediate assurance that you will have free rein in the work you are to do. Mr. Frohman has told me something of you and of your work, and I shall be very happy if my story gives you your first opportunity to succeed as a playwright.

"I am glad you are pleased with my story. Did you know that it was my first one? Your comment on the character of the musician interested me, as it is a close portrait of a friend.

"Trusting that we may work together to a successful end, I am

"Sincerely,

"THE AUTHOR.

"P. S. For private reasons I prefer to remain unknown to you. You can always reach me through Mr. Frohman's office. You must forgive typed letters."

This she sent to the Frohman office, with a request that it be forwarded. The next day brought Jarvis's news:

"DEAR BAMBI: For three days I have resisted the constant temptation to send you word of what seemed to be extraordinarily good news, but many disappointments have made me a doubting Thomas, so I held off until I was really sure. To begin at the beginning, I was at the lowest ebb of disgust with myself last week for my inability to get in step with the grand march. Only a fool can be excused for failure, and I am not that. So a summons from the Frohman office somewhat restored my self-respect. It seems that Mr. Frohman has never forgotten my previous interview, so when he decided to make a play of a popular novel entitled 'Francesca,' he immediately thought of me.

"Of course this is not the kind of play I want to do, so I said I would look over the book and if I liked it I would have a try at it. The long and the short of it is I have accepted. The woman who wrote the thing

has promised to keep out of it. She seems to be a nice kind of person, but for some reason wants to make a mystery of herself. Frohman hints at a domestic tragedy as her reason. I'm sure I do not care about her private affairs.

"She has written a clever and delightful book. The heroine, oddly enough called Francesca, suggests you in places, except that she is a more practical sort than you are. The hero, a musician, is a sort of sublimated madman. The best character of all is an old fiddler. There is a play in it. The more I think about it, the more I am convinced of that.

"Would you care to help me on it? Both of our names could go on the bill. I have come to know, these last months, since I have been working at things here alone, how much the growth in my work is due to you. The human touch you have given my characters, or helped me to give them, is the essential element in my improvement. You started a good many wires to jangling that spring day when you indulged your mad impulse to marry an impossibility!

"Regards to the Professor.

"Yours,

"JARVIS."

Bambi went to the telegraph office and wired him:

"Congratulations. Of course I'll help! Come home.

"BAMBI."

He answered, by letter, that he thought it best to stay on until Mr. Frohman and the author were both satisfied with the framework of the play. Then he would come, most gladly, to work in the old study. He would submit his ideas for a scenario the next day or so.

From that moment the fun began for Bambi. He wrote daily about the outline, and weekly letters to the author were forwarded to her from the Frohman office. These she answered, disguised as the author, with many a chuckle of amusement. A sort of friendliness crept into these letters as they increased in number.

Christmas week arrived with no definite assurance from Jarvis as to his plans, but Bambi was confident that he would be at home for the holiday. Professor Parkhurst demanded daily bulletins of his son-in-law's intentions, while Ardelia bemoaned and bewailed lest he fail to return.

The day before Kris Kringle was due a white snow descended like a benediction. Bambi and the Professor sat before a huge, crackling fire in the library. She was restless as a spirit. She sat at the piano and sang "O Lonely Pine Tree Standing," until the Professor objected.

"Sing something gay, my child."

"God rest ye, merry gentleman,
Let nothing ye dismay,
For Jesus Christ, the Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day,"

she sang gladly.

All at once her hands fell silent on the keys, while she stared at the doorway a full second before she rose. Jarvis stood there looking at her. He was powdered with snowflakes. He held his soft hat crushed against him, showing his hair, glistening with snow, and curled close to his head with dampness. It was his face that focussed her attention. The old proud carriage of the head was there, but an asking look had come into his eyes and mouth in place of the old arrogance. In the second she hesitated she saw all this — caught the glow and the beauty of him, as well as the appeal.

"Jarvis!" she cried, and met him halfway across the room, both hands out.

"Bambi!" he answered her huskily, and she knew that he was moved at the sight of her. He crushed her hands in his, and drank her in, from her shining eyes to her boots, oblivious to the startled Professor, who stood looking on.

"Welcome home!" said Bambi, unsteadily.

"Did you come through the roof?" inquired Professor Parkhurst.

"I had a passkey. How are you?" Jarvis laughed, mangling the Professor's hand. The latter rescued and inspected his limp fingers.

"I am well, but I shall never use that hand again."

"You have come home," said Bambi, foolishly.

"I have. My, but it's good to be here! I got Frohman's approval on the framework of the play today, and ran for the first train."

"Does the author approve, too?"

"She does. She is more or less a figurehead, but she seems reasonable."

"Oh, Jarvis, you're a nice Christmas present. Go put these wet things in the hall, call on Ardelia, and come back. It will take at least a week to say all the things I want to say to you."

He smiled at her, and marched off to do her bidding.

"He looks fine, doesn't he? I never realized before how handsome he is," said the Professor.

"He's thrilling!" replied Bambi.

Her father inspected her thoughtfully.

"What a talent you have for hitting people off!

That is just it: he thrills you with a feeling of youth and power."

"Plus some new and softer quality," added Bambi, as if to herself.

The powwow in the kitchen could be heard all over the house, Ardelia welcoming home the Prodigal Son. It was only after long argument he escaped the fatted calf. She could not conceive of him except as hungry after many months in the heathen city.

When he came back into the library he swept with his eyes its caressing harmony of colour, tone, and atmosphere. He had never noticed it before. The Professor's beautiful profile, like a fine steel engraving, thrown into high relief by the lamplight, seemed a part of it. The vibrant little figure on the hearth rug, in a flame-coloured gown, was the high note that gave it all climax. His mind swept the gamut of dirty hall bedrooms, back to this, and the sigh with which he sank into the big couch caught Bambi's amused attention.

"It was satisfaction," he assured her. "For the first time in my life, I've got the home feeling."

She nodded understandingly. Her mind, too, swept up those dirty stairs, peeped into the cell, and flew back, singing.

The Professor moved over beside Jarvis, and the wander tales began. Bambi fluttered about like a scarlet tanager, tantalizing Jarvis with a desire to catch her in his hand and hold her still.

At eleven the Professor said good night. Immediately Bambi led the talk to their proposed work, and held it there, firmly, until midnight chimed. Jarvis told her of the sale of the "Street Songs" to Strong's magazine, and announced that one hundred dollars of it was to be set down in the Black Maria account. She laughed and congratulated him.

Finally she rose.

"Your rooms are always ready for you, so I do not need to go up and see about them. A Merry Christmas, Jarvis Jocelyn."

He laid his hands on her shoulders and looked deep into her eyes. He thought he felt her tremble under his touch, but her glance was as frank and emotionless as a boy's.

"A Merry Christmas to you, Miss Mite," he answered, with a sigh. She laughed, unexpectedly patted his cheek with her hand, and ran upstairs.

XXII

CHRISTMAS DAY in the little house was a real celebration. It was the first one in the Jocelyns' married life, and the entire household entered into the spirit of Yuletide with enthusiasm. At Bambi's suggestion, they hid the presents all over the house. The subsequent search and discovery were carried on with much laughter and shouting. Ardelia's delight over her gifts was vocal and extreme. The Professor continually forgot which presents were his, and collected every one else's into his pile, from which the owner laughingly rescued them. A pair of silk stockings for Bambi which he absent-mindedly appropriated caused much mirth.

Jarvis's gift to Bambi was a dull gold chain, hung with tassels of baroque pearls, an exquisite feminine bauble.

"Oh, Jarvis, how charming! It's like a lovely lady's happy tears!" she exclaimed.

He blushed happily.

"I thought it looked like you."

"A thousand thanks! Fasten the clasp for me."

He fumbled it awkwardly, but with final success. She turned for inspection, her eyes avid for praise. He nodded.

"It is where it belongs," he said.

The day passed happily. Ardelia's dinner was a Christmas poem. When the Professor complimented her on the success of everything, she replied:

"Yassuh, dis heah day been all right. But I hopes befo' nex' Chris'mus we all gwine to have some chilluns to make dis a sho' nuff pahty."

Bambi's face was scarlet, but she faced it out.

"Oh, not children, Ardelia — singular, you mean, I hope."

"No, I don't mean sing'lar. We don' want no sing'lar chilluns. I mean jes' plain chilluns."

"The holiday seems to be peculiarly the children's day," said the Professor, unaware of the situation, and so saved it!

Thus it was that Jarvis was welcomed into the family circle again, and this time he became an integral part as he had never been before. The day after Christmas he came to Bambi with her story.

"You told me you had read this book, didn't you?"

"Yes, I've read it."

"What do you think of it?" he asked her, curiously.

"I adore it!" she replied.

He sat down beside her, gravely.

"It's a strange thing, but the book grows on you. When I first read it, I thought it was a clever little trifle. But as I work with it, I have come to see that it is remarkable in its human quality. You feel the charm of the author all through it."

"Do you?" eagerly.

"Didn't you?"

"I don't know. I loved the girl. She seemed very true to me."

"I've never known any girls except you, and I don't know you very well, but there are spots where you and the other Francesca are strikingly alike. I suppose it is not you, but *feminine*. I mix them up."

"If we are to make a play of it, I am glad we both love it."

"I find myself intensely interested in the mysterious woman who wrote it. To me there is no hint

in the story of the infelicity Mr. Frohman hinted at. I would like to know her."

"Don't you expect to see her when the play is finished?"

"She says she wishes me not to know her."

"But she will have to come to rehearsals?"

"I must ask her about that. Maybe she will come, then."

"You write to her?"

"Oh, yes. I have to keep her in touch with my progress."

"I thought you told her to keep out."

"I did. But she has been so agreeable about it that I decided to keep her posted as I went along."

Bambi rose.

"I've no doubt she is very fascinating," she said, coldly.

"You don't object to my interest in her?"

"Object? My dear Jarvis, you may be interested in all the women in creation without any objection from me!"

"And you have the same freedom?"

"Naturally. Now let's get to work. I was surprised at what you said about the young musician in the book. I thought he was so real."

"Strange. That is what the author said, that it was a close portrait of a near friend."

"What is it, about him, that you do not like?"

"Oh, I like him, in a way. But these reformers, idealists, thinking they can dream the world into Arcadia!"

Bambi's clear laugh startled him.

"What amuses you so?" he asked, shortly.

"I suppose I rather like the idealist type."

He looked at her closely.

"Good heavens, you don't think I'm like that, do you?"

"A little," she admitted.

"If I thought that I was that particular brand of idiot I'd learn bookkeeping and be a clerk," was the reply.

"Maybe it isn't you — maybe it is just *man* I recognize."

"You can see how terribly clever the woman is — to set each of us accusing the other."

"She is just a student of types, that's all," Bambi disparaged the lady.

So they began their copartnership. The shyness, the appeal, the new self-conscious element Bambi had sensed in Jarvis gave way to the old mental

relationship as fellow workman. They had regular office hours, as they called it. They experimented to see whether they obtained the best results, when they each worked at a scene alone and went over it together for the final polishing; or when they actually worked on it in unison. Four hours in the morning they laboured, took an hour of recess after lunch, then two hours more, followed by a tramp off into the country, talking play, play, play.

These were days of keen delight to them both. They worked together so smoothly and so well. Jarvis's high-handed superiority had given way to a well-grounded respect for Bambi's quick apprehension of a false note, an unnatural line, or a bungled climax.

The first interruption came with the advent of Richard Strong to spend the week-end, and Jarvis made no comment when Bambi announced his coming and declared Saturday a holiday. He even agreed to meet their guest at the station. The two men came back together in amicable converse.

"I am so glad you could come, Richard," Bambi greeted him, in her eager way.

Jarvis started at the Christian name, and flushed angrily at Strong's reply.

"Happy New Year, Francesca!"

Richard and Francesca — so they had gone as far as that on the road to intimacy was Jarvis's hurt comment to himself.

After that he watched Strong every minute for signs of special devotion, and before the day was over he had satisfied himself that these two cared deeply for each other. The way Strong's eyes followed her every movement, the way he anticipated her wants, understood her before she spoke — they were all damning evidences of the situation. That Bambi showed herself grateful, as vividly as she did everything else, entirely escaped Jarvis. She loved him, that was the truth, and he alone stood between her and happiness.

The two days dragged by, in torment, for him. It seemed as if they would never be over, so that he might face the truth by himself, with Strong out of the picture, and decide what must be done. Bambi noticed his strained politeness to their guest, but set it down to the same inconsistency he had shown before, of being jealous of what he did not especially value himself.

Monday, after Strong's departure, she began to realize that there was a change in him. He was

taciturn and moody. The work went badly. He disagreed with her at every point, and when she suggested that they stop an hour earlier than usual, he went off by himself, without asking her to go. She began to wonder whether his dislike of Strong was really serious and something to be taken cognizance of.

Jarvis strode off into the country in a state of nerves unknown before. A sleepless night and the irritation of the day's work had played their havoc with him. He went over the thing again and again. Bambi and Strong loved each other — he stood in the way. Why should he not take himself out of the situation at once? "She married me for a whim; she will unmarry me the same way," he reiterated to himself. "Why did she do it, in the first place, unless she cared something for me? But she told me she had no sentiment for me," he replied to his other self. "It was ambition that made her do it. She thought I would be famous. I've disappointed her, and she's through with me." He went over every incident of their reunion — his thrill at her welcome. "She didn't really care; it was just her way," he assured himself.

For hours he plunged through the woods, pursued

by his bitter thoughts. When he turned back at last, into the garden, he knew that a precious, new-born thing, which he had brought back with him after his exile, was laid away, never to be allowed to come into full flower and maturity.

His decision was made. He temporized on one point. He would stay on until the play was produced, so that if it succeeded, as he was determined it should, Bambi would have that much satisfaction from her matrimonial experiment. Then he would let her divorce him, and he would take himself out of her life.

She was in the library when he went in. She caught sight of his face, and exclaimed:

"Jarvis, my dear, how tired you look!"

He started to go, but she detained him.

"Is anything the matter, Jarvis?"

"No, what should be the matter?"

"I don't know, but if there is anything you want to talk out with me, let's have it now. We can't afford to have any misunderstandings between us."

"There is nothing," he said, and left the room.

That night, after dinner, he sat late in his study, writing. Two days later the result of the evening's work came to Bambi:

"Dear Author Lady: Some days ago I sent you my new address, so that you need not send letters to the theatre, but so far I have not heard from you. To-night, for some reason, I feel moved to write to you as I would wish to talk to you were you near me.

"I say for some reason, and yet I know the reason. It is because of your human understanding of the things that make men glad or sad. I am beginning to know that only through the ache of experience can we come to understand each other. Surely there must be something of sadness back of your life, Lady of Mystery, to give you this power.

"To-day I have fought out a bitter fight with myself, and I feel the loneliness that comes in a crisis, when each man of us must stand or fall, alone.

"The play goes ahead rapidly. As I told you, Mrs. Jocelyn and I have great satisfaction in our work on it. I am determined to wring success from it. Both for your sake and for mine, I must!

"Is this personal letter distasteful to you? Do I depend too much upon your gracious understanding? If I do, say so, and I will not offend again.

"Faithfully,

"Jarvis Jocelyn."

Bambi read this letter over and over again, behind the locked door of her bedroom. What did it all mean? What was the bitter fight that drove Jarvis to this other woman for solace? How far did she dare draw him out on it, without offending her own sense of fitness? Had this innocent plot of hers, to startle

him into amazed admiration, led them both into a labyrinth of misunderstanding?

She answered Jarvis's letter and sent it to the theatre, asking them to forward it:

"Dear Mr. Jocelyn: Your letter touched me very much in its appeal for my sympathy and understanding. I am regretful that sorrow has found you out. I think of you always as young and strong and happy, with a young wife, and the world before you. I hate to have you spoil my picture.

"I repeat my satisfaction that you and your wife enjoy your work on 'Francesca.' I found such happiness myself in doing her, that I like to think we share the pleasure between us, we three.

"Is it your own ambition that drives you so that you say 'I must,' in regard to success? Sometimes, if we set our hearts too much on a thing, our very determination thwarts us. Is it not so? Perhaps it is for the sake of some one else that you are so eager for accomplishment. I feel that it is to come to you in this play, and I am glad.

"Be of good cheer, Comrade. Even the memory of bitter fights grows dim. I will not think of you as daunted by anything life can offer. No, nor death. Why have I this confidence in you, I wonder?

"In all friendliness,

"The Lady of Mystery."

The day this letter came to Jarvis marked a change in him to Bambi's watchful eye. He threw himself

with renewed ardour into the work. For the first time in many days they walked together, and he seemed more himself than he had been since Strong's unfortunate visit. Was it the effect of this letter? He was beginning to be easily influenced by this supposed stranger! The idea was too fantastic.

"What kind of a woman do you imagine the author of 'Francesca' to be?" she asked him as they trudged along a wintry road. He started a little, she thought.

"I scarcely know," he evaded. "I always think of her as tall and thin and frail, with a rather sad face, white, with humorous gray eyes, and a sensitive mouth."

"I always think of her as little and fat and cuddly."

"Oh, not cuddly!" he protested.

She laughed.

"Any news from her lately?"

"Yes. I had a letter to-day."

"Did you ask if she was coming to rehearsals?"

"Not yet."

"Haven't you any curiosity about her?"

"In a way, yes. But I respect her desire in the matter."

"I don't. If I could get it out of Richard Strong who she is, I'd go look her up in a minute."

"Have you tried?" eagerly.

"He won't tell. He's the King of Clams."

"He has no right to tell."

"It is very smart of her to work up all this mystery about herself. No doubt she is a wobbly old fatty, instead of the Beatrice you think her."

He made no answer, but she saw by his face how he resented it.

A wicked design grew in Bambi's mind. She would make Jarvis Jocelyn fall so desperately and hopelessly in love with this dream-woman of his that she would be revenged upon him for the way he had shut her out since Strong's visit. It never once occurred to her that it was a hurt she had given him which drove him to this other woman. But the something which he had offered her the night of his return he had deliberately withdrawn, before she had a chance to accept or refuse it. Well, here was a chance to punish him and she would take it.

XXIII

FROM the day of her resolve absolute impersonality characterized their relations during work hours. Sometimes they walked together; sometimes Bambi went alone or made visits to her friends. Jarvis felt more and more her withdrawal from him. He attributed it to her increased affection for Strong and a consequent abhorrence of her husband's presence.

One morning she announced that she was going to New York for the day.

"But we were to work on the big climax to-day," Jarvis protested.

"You work at it. You can do it without me," she said, airily.

"You are as tired of the play as you are of me," said Jarvis earnestly.

"Absurd. I am much interested in the play and I am not tired of you."

"Shall you see Strong?"

"Yes. I shall spend part of the day with him. Did you wish to send him a message?"

"It wouldn't be fit for you to carry," he answered, fiercely.

"Richard is not your favourite companion, is he?" she tantalized.

"He is not!"

"Sorry. I am very fond of him."

"That does not need saying."

"I have never tried to disguise it."

"No, I should say you were both frank about it."

"Why shouldn't we be, Jarvis?" said Bambi with irritation.

"Exactly. Why shouldn't you be?"

"You naturally cannot expect to regulate or choose my friends."

"I expect nothing."

"Then I would be obliged to you if you made your dislike of my friend a trifle less conspicuous."

"If you will let me know when he is expected, I will always go elsewhere."

It was the first hint of disagreement that had ever occurred between them, and Bambi took the train to New York with a disagreeable taste in her mouth. She was going for a conference with Strong about the

book, which had got a splendid start in the holiday sales. He had some plans to feature it in various conspicuous ways, so that it might advertise the play.

Arrived in Grand Central Station, she wired Jarvis, "Sorry was horrid about Strong," just to make her self-esteem less flat. Then she went to Strong's office. He greeted her in his cordial way, only his eyes admitting his joy at sight of her.

"It is good to see you," he said.

"You won't like me. I'm utterly detestable today. I was nasty to Jarvis, and cross with Ardelia."

"I can't imagine you either nasty or cross."

"Me? Oh, I scratch and spit and bite!"

"You are the most human person I ever encountered," he laughed.

"Be nice to me, and I may cheer up."

"I shall try. I have news about the sale of the book that ought to cheer a tombstone. I think we have a best-seller on our hands."

"I'm not a bit ashamed of it."

"Why should you be?"

"Aren't you a literary pariah, if you're a best-seller?"

He laughed.

"How is the play coming on?"

"Pretty well, I think. We're up to the climax of the second act. Jarvis is working on it to-day."

"Still no suspicion of you?"

"Not a grain. I think he's falling in love with the author of 'Francesca,' though."

"How?"

"Through their letters."

"You certainly have a talent for comedy," he laughed, and added, gravely, "I thought Jocelyn had always been in love with the author of "Francesca'?"

"No-o."

"I have always known that the author of 'Francesca' cared about Jarvis."

"You must have dreamed that, Richard. Poor old Jarvis! Sometimes I think I will confess. Maybe I have no right to make game of him this way."

"Doesn't he suspect your style in your letters? I would know a letter from you, no matter what the circumstances."

"Oh, I don't write like myself. I write like an author. I found out what he thought she looked like, and I write tall, pale, sensitive-mouthed kind of letters, with a hint of sadness."

"You imp!" he laughed.

"Improves my style. You ought to be glad. Let's hear about the plans for the book."

They settled down to discussing advertising plans, which kept them busy until late afternoon. When the last detail was settled, Bambi rose with a sigh.

"Whew! That was a long siege. Like Corp in 'Sentimental Tommy,' it makes me sweat to think."

"I should not have kept it up so long. I forget you are not used to this drill," he apologized.

"I think I'll live. Remember the first time I came to see you?"

"Perfectly."

"Wasn't I scared?"

"Were you?"

"You were so kind and fatherly."

"Fatherly?" he said.

"What lots of things have happened to me since then," she mused.

"And to me," said Richard, under his breath.

"Heigho! Life is a bubble."

"You'll feel better after a cup of tea. Where shall we go?"

"Let's walk up to the Plaza."

"Done," said he, closing his desk.

It was a cold, crisp day, which stimulated the

blood like a cocktail. Bambi breathed deep as she tried to fall in step with her companion.

"I can't keep step with you. I'm too little and my skirt's too tight."

"I'll keep step with you, my lady."

"Mercy, don't try. Jarvis says I hop along like a grasshopper."

"I resent that. Your free, swaying walk is one of your charms. You always make me think of a wind-blown flower."

She looked up at him, radiantly.

"Richard, you say the charmingest things!"

"Francesca, you do inspire them."

"I'm a vain little peacock, and Jarvis never notices how I look."

"Too bad to mate a peacock and an owl."

A brilliant sunset bathed the avenue in a red, gold light. The steady procession of motors, taxis, and hansom cabs made its slow way uptown. The shop windows blazed in their most seductive moments. The sidewalks were crowded with smart men; fashionable women swathed in magnificent furs; slim, little pink-cheeked girls. All of them made their way up the broad highroad toward home or tea, as the case might be.

"Oh, you blessed fleshpots, how I adore you!"

"Referring to the men or the women?"

"Naughty Richard! I mean all the luxury and sensuousness which New York represents."

"You hungry little beggar, how you do eat up your sensations!"

"They give me indigestion sometimes."

The foyer of the Plaza was like a reception. The tea-room was a-clatter and a-clack with tongues.

"Like the clatter of sleek little squirrels," said Bambi, as she followed the head-waiter to their table.

Her comments on people about them, the nicknames she donated to them, convulsed Strong. He would never again see that pompous head-waiter except as "Papa Pouter!"

"Would you get tired of it if you were here all the time?"

"I suppose so. It is all so alike. The women all look alike, and the men, and the waiters. If you dropped through the ceiling, you could hardly tell whether you were in the Ritz, the Plaza, the Manhattan, or the Knickerbocker. You would know it was New York — that's all."

"What train do you take to-night, or shall you stay over?"

"I shall go on the 11:50, if you'll play with me until then."

He smiled at her affectation.

"Suppose we try another kind of crowd to-night, and dine at the Lafayette."

"Delighted! I've never been there."

"It's jolly. You'll like it, I think."

"Where is it?"

"Way downtown — University Place. What shall we do between now and dinner-time?"

"Let's walk down."

"Oh, that's a long walk."

"But I love to walk, unless it is too much for you."

"Sheer impudence!"

The walk was one never to be forgotten by Strong. To have Bambi all to himself, to look forward to hours of such bliss, to have her swinging along beside him, laughing and chattering, now and again laying her hand on his arm in confident friendliness — it was intoxicating.

By sheer force of will he kept his hand on the throttle of his emotions. One look, one false move, would ruin it all. He knew, without any doubts that she did not love him. He even told himself she loved Jocelyn. He knew that he must make

himself a valuable friend and not an undesired lover, but his want of her was great, and his fury at Jarvis's indifference white hot. She caught his set look.

"Richard!"

He turned his eyes on her.

"You're tired of me. I won't talk any more."

He drew her hand through his arm, and held her there.

"Don't say that sort of thing, please; it isn't fair."

"Take it back."

The Lafayette filled her with excitement. They had a table on a raised balcony overlooking the main dining-room. Richard pointed out celebrities, bowed to many friends, talked charming personalities. A feast of Lucullus was served them. Music and wine and excitement bewitched Bambi. She sparkled and laughed. She capped his every sally with a quick retort. She was totally different from the girl-boy who had walked downtown beside him.

"What are you thinking about me?" she challenged him, her head tipped back provokingly.

"Daughter of Joy!"

"I have spent a very pleasant fortnight with you, Richard!"

"Has it seemed that long?"

"Since I left Sunnyside this morning? Quite."

"How many personalities have you been since then?"

"Oh, not nearly all my mes."

"Protean artist?"

"Headliner," she nodded.

They drank to the success of the play. Later, as he stood beside her in the car, a few minutes before she was to leave, she put her hand in his.

"I've had the loveliest time," she said. "You are the most accomplished playmate I ever had."

"It has been a happy day."

"Come to Sunnyside soon."

The train began to move out and he hurried to get off. She waved to him from the window. She was tired, so she went to bed at once, with never a dream of the emptiness her small presence left in New York for the "Playmate."

XXIV

"WHAT luck did you have with the climax, yesterday?" she asked Jarvis, next day, as she came into the workroom.

"None at all. I worked all day, and tore it up last night."

"Oh, why did you do that?"

"It was hopeless. If you wanted to teach me how vital you are to this work, you did it."

"Such a thing never entered my mind."

"Shall we begin at it now?"

"Of course. I'm keen to get at it."

She plunged into the situation and swept all obstacles before her. The entire reaction from yesterday's pleasure and change went into her work. Lunch-time came as a shock, the morning had fled so fast. Jarvis sighed as he piled up the pages.

"You work like an electric dynamo," he remarked.

"I always work better after a happy vacation. Why don't you run off for a day, to get your breath, as it were?"

"Where would I run to?"

"You might go look up the author-lady you're so interested in," she remarked, wickedly.

He made no answer to that.

The noon mail brought Bambi's latest letter from Jarvis. All mail was brought immediately to her, so she had a chance to extract the telltale letters. Jarvis wrote:

"DEAR LADY: Your letters are fast becoming a necessity to me. I look for them as eagerly as a boy. I find myself more and more absorbed in the 'Francesca' of your fancy, whom I feel sure is the essence of you. Is it not so?

"I am bitterly unhappy these days — lonely, as I have never been before. The emotional side of life has always been a closed book to me, one I disdained to read. So once my heart begins to call attention to itself, I suppose the more poignant will be my experience.

"I have lately come back from a long exile spent in a hideous place. I brought with me the first hunger for love I had ever known. But I found no answering need in the heart I turned to. I have been thrown back on myself, to eat my heart out, because I know now that it is my own fault. If I had tried sooner to make myself a lover, I would not have to resign that place to another man.

"Why do I pour these personal sorrows upon you, my Lady of Sympathy? I am heartsick for comfort.

"Yours, "J."

Bambi laid her cheek against the poor, hurt letter, and cried.

"My poor, bungling Jarvis, how I must have hurt you!"

She read it again, and all at once light flooded in.

"Why, it's Richard, of course! He thinks I am in love with Richard! The dear old goose! He sees so little and sees that crooked."

She went in search of him, determined to tell the whole foolish story, to explain the imaginary obstacles that divided them. But he was not to be found, so the impulse died, and she determined to play the farce out to its end, and now, that she knew the core of the whole situation, she could make it count for their final readjustment.

She wrote him at once:

"My Dear Jarvis: At last I feel that there is truth between us. I have suspected that you were not happy in your love life. But I wanted not to pry into locked chambers. Now we can be glad of the bond that lies between us, for I, too, go heart hungry through the days.

"I have not spoken to you of my home, or my husband, but now that you have become such a part of my thought life, I feel no disloyalty in the truth.

"My husband is a man who has never felt the want of affection. He is so self-centred in his de-

votion to his work that I have always been shut out of his heart. At first this did not trouble me, for I was ambitious, too. But so many things have happened to develop me this last year, to awaken me to my full womanhood!

"I have had to face, as you do, the ache of an unwanted love, tossed back to eat its way like a corrosive acid. Once, not long ago, I thought, perhaps, things were going to change for me. I thought he wanted me. But now I have come to know that it is to another woman he turns for sympathy and understanding.

"So, you see, my dear, we two have the same heart history. No wonder we have felt our way through time and space, to clasp hands in such deep affinity. I lay my hands upon your head, Jarvis.

"Your Lady."

His reply came by the first mail.

"Oh, my dear, my dear, we have found each other at last, in all truth. It was meant from the beginning of time that it should be so. Let me come to you. I cannot bear to live another hour without the touch of your hand. To think that I do not know your name, or the colour of your kind eyes! Say that I may come?

"Devotedly,

"Jarvis."

"Jarvis, My Big Boy: You may not come yet. It is part of a dream, cherished since you came to be the heart of me, that we should not come together

until the night of the opening of our play. I know you will poohpooh this as sentimental nonsense. You may even call it theatrical. But let me have my way, this last one time. Afterward, my way shall be yours, beloved. Write me to say you will be patient with my foolishness!

"I am afraid of our meeting. Suppose I should fall short of your ideal of me? That you should think me ugly or old, I could not bear it. I have come to know all my happiness lies in the balance of that one night, toward which we walk, you and I, every minute of every day.

"YOUR LADY."

His answer came, special delivery:

"It shall be as you wish, dear heart. But if anything should happen to delay the opening of the play, I think I should ask you to remit the sentence of banishment. I live only to look into your eyes!

"How can you say that you may disappoint me? If you were old, humpbacked, ugly — what difference? You are mine! We must find freedom for ourselves and a new life. I adore you.

"JARVIS."

"I wouldn't have thought it of Jarvis," said Bambi as she read it. "He makes a very creditable lover."

"MY DEAR ONE: I am as impatient as you are for our meeting. I gladly agree that we shall bring

it about, at once, if anything happens to postpone the play opening.

"What you say about being indifferent to my looks makes me happy. I shall not try you too far, my lover. I'm quite pretty and young. Did you know I was young?

"You speak so confidently of freedom and a new life together. Are we to shed our old mates, like Nautilus shells? My new coming into love makes me pitiful. Must we be ruthless?

"YOUR OWN."

"DEAR, GENTLE HEART: I do not wish to seem ruthless to you, much less to be so. But has our suffering not entitled us to some joy? I know my wife to be absorbed in another man; you say your husband turns to another woman. We represent to them stumbling-blocks between them and their happiness. Surely it is only right that we should all be freed to find our true mates.

"I find it daily more of a burden to carry this secret in my heart, when knowledge of it would lighten my wife's unhappiness. Shall we not confess the situation, and discuss plans for separation? I owe this girl who bears my name more than I can ever pay. I would not do anything to hurt her pride. Tell me what you think about it, dear one?

"YOUR JARVIS."

"JARVIS DEAR: Again I must seem to oppose you. Please let us keep our secrets to ourselves until our meeting. Suppose that something should happen even yet? Suppose we should not wish to take

this step when the time comes? I do not want you to hurt your wife. I respect and love you for your sense of obligation to her. How can she help loving you, my Jarvis?

"When the day comes for me to prove my devotion, may you say about me that you owe me more than you can ever pay.

"I live only for the completion of the play.

"YOUR LOVE."

XXV

BAMBI felt the renewed vigour with which Jarvis attacked the final problems of their task. He was working toward the goal of his affections, a meeting with his lady. She, too, felt the strain of the situation, and keyed herself up to a final burst of speed. The middle of February came, bringing the day which ended their labours.

"Well, I believe that is the best we can do with it," Jarvis said.

"Yes, our best best. For my part, I feel quite fatuously satisfied. I think it is perfectly charming."

"I hope the author will be pleased," he said earnestly.

"I'm much more concerned with Mr. Frohman's satisfaction. If he likes it, hang the author!"

"But I want to please her more than I can say."

"You have a great interest in that woman, Jarvis. What is it about her that has caught your attention?"

"It is difficult to say. As I have grown into her

book, so that it has become a part of my thought, I have been more and more absorbed in the personality of the woman."

"You told me the heroine was like me — once."

"Did I?" in surprise.

"You've changed your mind, evidently?"

"No-o. Her brilliance is like you."

"But not her other qualities?"

"She seems softer, more appealingly feminine to me, than you do. You have so much more executive ability ——"

"You think I'm not feminine?"

"I didn't say that," he evaded.

"Why do you insist upon thinking the author and heroine to be one person?"

"Just a fancy, I suppose. But the book is so intimate that I feel consciously, or otherwise, the woman has written herself into 'Francesca.'"

"You may be approaching an awful shock, my dear Jarvis, when you meet her."

"I think not."

"These author folk! She'll be a middle-aged dowd, mark my words."

He rose indignantly, and put the last sheets of the manuscript away. She watched him, smiling.

"Shall you go to New York to-morrow?"

"Yes, if I can get an appointment by wire. I am going to see about it now."

"I do hope he will be sensible enough to put it on right away."

"He told me to rush it. I think he means an immediate production."

"The end of our work together," mused Bambi.

He turned to her quickly.

"You care?"

"Don't you?"

"It has really been your work, Bambi."

It was her turn to be startled, but evidently he had no ulterior meaning.

"Not at all. I think it is wonderful how well we work together, considering ——"

"Considering?" he insisted.

"Oh, our difference in point of view, and, oh, everything!" she added.

"It would disappoint you if it were our last work together?"

"What an idea, Jarvis! I look forward to years and years of annual success by the Jocelyns."

He frowned uncomfortably, as if to speak, thought better of it, and kept silence.

"I'll go send my wire," he said.

She kissed her finger tips to his receding back.

Later, too, she went to the telegraph office and sent the following wire.

"*Mr. Charles Frohman:*

"See Jarvis, if possible, to-morrow. Play finished. Sure success.

"FRANCESCA JOCELYN."

The secretary answered Jarvis's wire at once, making the appointment at eleven o'clock on the morrow.

"It seems incredible that anything could run as smoothly as this for me," said Jarvis, as he read the dispatch.

"That's because I'm in it," boasted Bambi, with a touch of her old impudence. "I'm your mascot."

"That must be it."

"It means a midnight train for you, to make it comfortably. Do you suppose you will stay more than a day?"

"I should think not. I don't know."

Ardelia came in with a yellow envelope.

"Sumpin' doin' roun' dis heah house. Telegram boy des' a-ringin' at de' do' bell stiddy."

"For me?" said Bambi.

"*Mrs. Jarvis Jocelyn, Sunnyside, New York.*

"Mr. Frohman will see you at three o'clock to-morrow."

Bambi gazed at it a moment, a bit dazed, then she laughed.

"Anything the matter?" Jarvis inquired.

"No-o. Oh, no."

This was how it happened that Mr. Jarvis Jocelyn took the midnight train to New York, while Mrs. Jarvis Jocelyn followed on an early morning one.

"But why, if you both have to go to that city of abominations, do you not go together?" inquired the Professor.

"Part of the secret," she reminded him.

"Dear me, I had forgotten we were living in a plot. How is it coming out?"

"I will know to-day, definitely, just how, when, and where it is coming out."

Jarvis presented himself at the theatre at eleven sharp, and felt a thrill of righteous pride when he was ushered into the private office without delay. His vow that he would enter without so much as a calling-card had come true sooner than he had hoped.

Mr. Frohman smiled in his friendly way, and shook hands.

"How's my friend, the ex-Jehu?" he laughed.

"Fine! I hope you are well."

"I'm all right. How's the play?"

"I have it here. It is good."

"Good, is it?" Mr. Frohman's eyes twinkled.

"Yes. My — Mrs. Jocelyn worked at it with me, and I have to admit that the success, if it is one, is largely due to her."

"She is a writer, too?"

"No, but she has a keen dramatic sense. She understands character, too."

"So? Lucky for you. Does she want her name on the bills?"

"She has never spoken of it, but I wish her to go on as co-dramatist."

"All right. Clever wife is an asset. Now we've got just two hours. Go ahead — read me what you've got there."

Jarvis unpacked the manuscript and began. He had worked over the scenes so often with Bambi that he fell into her dramatic way of "doing" the scenes. Once or twice the manager chuckled as he recognized her touch and intonation on a line. Certainly Jarvis had never read so well. He was encouraged by frequent laughs from his audience.

There were interruptions now and then, criticisms and suggestions. As he read and laid down the last page, Mr. Frohman nodded his head.

"Pretty clever work for amateurs," he said.

"You think it will go?"

"With some changes and rearrangements. Yes, I should say so."

"Are you thinking of producing it soon?"

"Yes, if I can make satisfactory arrangements with the author I'll put it in rehearsal right away."

"I think the author will be satisfied."

The manager looked a question.

"We have been corresponding during my work on it," Jarvis explained.

Mr. Frohman stared, then laughed.

"We can soon find out whether she's pleased. She is due here at three o' clock to-day."

"She is coming here to-day?" Jarvis exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Could I talk to her then — there is so much ——"

"Sorry. I promised there would be no one here. Some crazy idea about keeping her name a secret."

"Of course. I would not intrude," said Jarvis, hastily. "She wrote me that she would leave rehearsals to you and me."

"Did she? Will your wife want to come to rehearsals?"

"I think so. Would there be any objections?"

"Not if she is co-author."

"She is very clever."

"I don't doubt it. You leave that copy here. I'll go over it, in part, with the author, and let her take it to look over. I will wire you what day I want to get the company together for a reading."

"All right, sir."

"If the author is satisfied with this, I'll have a contract made out to submit to you and your wife. In the meantime, do you want an advance?"

"No, thanks."

"All right. You'll hear from me. You've done surprisingly well with this, Jocelyn — you, or your wife."

"Thank you. Good-day."

"Good-day."

At three o'clock the other member of the Jocelyn family arrived.

"You are good to see me. I would have burst with curiosity before Jarvis got back," she began the minute she got inside the door.

"I naturally wanted to consult the author before I accepted the play."

"Is it any good? Are you going to take it?"

"What do you think about it? Are you satisfied?"

"Yes. I think it's a love of a play."

He laughed.

"How much of it did Jarvis do?"

"Oh, a great deal!"

"Not enough to spoil it, eh?"

"He has worked very hard," she said seriously.

"He tells me he has corresponded with the author during his work, and he begged to be here for this meeting."

"Did he? Bless his heart! It has been so funny — that correspondence! He's crazy about that author-lady."

"Either you are very clever, or he's very stupid, which is it?"

"Both."

"When are you going to tell him the truth?"

"The opening night."

"Upon my word, you *have* got a dramatic sense. Blaze of success, outbursts of applause, husband finds wife is the centre and cause of it. That sort of thing, eh?"

"Yes, but don't say it like that. It sounds silly and cheap."

"Husband will be mad as fury at the whole thing."

"You don't think that, do you? That would spoil the whole thing so entirely," she said in concern.

"You're the dramatist, I'm only the manager," he laughed.

They talked about the cast, the sets, and other practical details.

"You're coming to rehearsals, aren't you?" he asked her.

"Rather!"

"Jarvis prepared me for that."

"Did he? Well, he won't be much good. He can't act."

"I told him you would look over the play, then I would call the company together for a reading."

"Consider the script looked over. Do call it quick, Mr. Frohman; I can hardly wait."

"What about contracts? Do you want one as author, with another to you and Jarvis as playwrights?"

"No, that's too complicated. Let's have one for the whole thing, then we can divvy up what there is."

"Suits me. I'll see you next week, then. Better make arrangements to stay in town during rehearsals."

"Oh, yes, we will."

"I think we will pull off a success. This is very human, this stuff. Good-bye."

"You've been such a dear. We've just got to succeed for your sake. Good-bye, and thanks."

XXVI

BAMBI hurried to catch the 5:30 train for home, and as it rushed through the station she spied Jarvis striding on ahead, evidently bound for the same train. With the caution of a lady detective she kept behind him until he got aboard. Then she rushed ahead and got into the first car. At Sunnyside she astonished the town hackman by leaping into his cab and ordering him to drive her home, top speed.

The situation appealed to her taste for intrigue. Into the house she sped and to her room. The Professor and Ardelia were in bed and asleep. When Jarvis came in she descended, to inquire about the fate of their play, with the ca'm of a finished actress.

"I'm waiting for you! What news?" she demanded.

"He likes it. If the author is satisfied, we go ahead at once."

"Hooray!" shouted Bambi, pirouetting madly. "Mr. and Mrs. Jarvis Jocelyn, the talk of the town," she sang.

"You did want your name on the bills, then?"

She stopped in alarm. Had she given it away after all her trouble?

"How do you mean on the bills?"

"As co-author? Mr. Frohman asked me. I told him you had never spoken of it, but that I wanted you to have full credit."

"What else did you tell Mr. Frohman about me?"

"I told him you were clever."

"What did he say?" she laughed.

"Said he didn't doubt it. He will allow you to come to rehearsals."

"I should hope so! So it's all settled?"

"Yes, if the author consents. She was to see the play at three this afternoon."

"Was she? Why didn't you wait and see her?"

"She wished to talk to Mr. Frohman alone."

"Isn't she tiresome, with all her mystery? You don't think she could hold us up on it now, at the last minute, do you?"

"She could, but I don't think she will. Rehearsals will be called next week."

"Oh, goody! Jarvis, aren't you happy about it?"

"Yes."

"But you aren't happy enough!"

He sighed. It was all so different from the way he had planned to bring her his first success.

"Something seems to have gone amiss with us, doesn't it, Bambi?"

"I haven't noticed it."

"You're satisfied to go on as we are now?"

"I can think of a few improvements. I'll tell you about them later."

"So many things seem to hinge on the success of this play!"

"They do! May the gods take notice," she laughed.

On the following Tuesday came the call for a reading of the play with the company, Wednesday, at eleven. Bambi was as excited as a child over the announcement.

"I think we had better plan to stay at the National Arts Club again, during rehearsals, Jarvis."

"I am not sure I can finance that. I told Mr. Frohman I did not need an advance."

"I've got some left. You can borrow back the hundred you paid me, to start off on."

"You're like the old woman with the magic purse."

"I'm thrifty and saving."

"Well, if we can accomplish it without robbing you

I agree with you that it would be better to stay in town."

"Settled. You go pack your things, and I'll look after mine."

They prepared to make their second pilgrimage, this time to the "Land of Promise."

The Professor showed an unusual amount of interest in the matter.

"How long will it take to rehearse it?" he asked.

"We don't know yet, we're such amateurs. But as soon as we know the date set for the opening you and Ardelia are to prepare to come. You can come up the day of the performance, and if you can't stand it, you may come home the next day."

"A trip to New York? What an upsetting idea!"

"Would you rather stay here, and miss the first play Jarvis and I ever did together?" said Bambi, disappointedly.

"No, certainly not. I'll come. Just make a note of it, and put it in a conspicuous place," he added.

"We'll keep you reminded, never fear."

Ardelia gasped when she heard she was to go.

"I'll send you a list of the clothes to bring for the Professor in plenty of time. I shall give you a new black silk dress for the occasion."

"Lawd a' massy, Miss Bambi! I'se so excited I cain't talk. A noo silk dress an' a-goin' to Noo Yawk wid de Perfessor. I decla' dey ain't no niggah woman in dis heah town got sech quality to work fo' as dis old niggah has."

"Why, Ardelia, we couldn't have it without you."

"Am I gwine sit wid de' white folks in de' theatre, or up in niggah heaven?"

"You'll sit in a box with the rest of us."

"Gawd-a'mighty, honey, dis gwine to be de happies' 'casion ob my life."

The co-authors took the night train.

"Not quite a year ago since our first journey together," said Bambi.

"That's so. It seems a century, doesn't it?"

"That is a distinctly husband remark."

"I was only thinking of how much had happened in that time."

"Two new beings have happened — a new you and a new me," she answered him.

"Are you as changed as I am?" he asked.

"Yes. You haven't noticed me enough to realize it, I suppose."

He made no reply to that. Arrived in New York, they went to the clubhouse, and took the same rooms

they had before. As Bambi looked about the room, she turned to Jarvis in the doorway:

"It is a century since I knelt at that window and arranged our spectacular success."

"Well, we're a year nearer to it. Let's get a good night's rest, for to-morrow we enter on a new chapter."

"It's jolly we enter it together, isn't it, Jarvis?"

He nodded, embarrassed.

"I should like to wish you luck in the new venture, Mr. Jarvis Jocelyn."

"I wish you the same, Miss Mite," he said, clasping her hand warmly.

"You haven't called me Miss Mite for a long time," she said, softly. "I like it."

"Good-night," said Jarvis abruptly, and left.

"You're a poor actor, my Jarvis," she chuckled to herself.

At eleven o'clock they presented themselves at the theatre. The reading was to take place in Mr. Frohman's big room. Jarvis and Bambi were admitted at once.

"Good-morning," said Mr. Frohman.

"Good-morning. This is Mrs. Jocelyn, Mr. Frohman."

Bambi offered her hand to the manager with a solemn face, but the laugh twinkled in her eyes.

"How do you do, Mrs. Jocelyn? I understand that you had a great deal to do with this play?"

"I did," she admitted. "Without me this play would have been nothing."

"This leaves you no ground to stand on, Mr. Jocelyn," he laughed.

The members of the company arrived and were presented to the authors. Bambi kept them all laughing until Mr. Frohman called order. They sat in state around the big table.

"I propose that Mrs. Jocelyn read us the play," Mr. Frohman said.

"Oh, shall I? It is really Jarvis —— "

"If you please," said Mr. Frohman, indicating a chair.

So Bambi began, with a smile at Jarvis, and another at the audience. They all felt in a good humour. The play was so peculiarly hers, the intimate quality which had made the book "go" had been wonderfully retained, so that spontaneous laughter marked her progress through the comedy. It was all so true and universal, the characters so well drawn, the dénouement so happy! At the climax

of the third act the company broke into irresistible and unpremeditated applause.

"Oh, God bless you for that!" said Bambi, her eyes wet with gratitude.

"We ought to cast you for the girl. You are enough like her to have sat for the portrait," said Mr. Frohman, wickedly.

Jarvis turned to look at Bambi in his earnest way. He marked the likeness, again, himself.

"I shall play it just as you read it, Mrs. Jocelyn," said the girl who was cast for the lead.

"You will greatly improve on my Francesca, I'm sure," Bambi nodded to her.

Parts were distributed, much discussion followed as to character drawing and business, then they separated to meet for rehearsal the next day at 10:30. Mr. Frohman had an immediate appointment, so the Jocelyns had no opportunity for a word in private.

"Queer that Mr. Frohman should think that you are like Francesca, too," said Jarvis, on their way to the club.

"Oh, I don't know. We are the same type. That's all."

"You could play the part wonderfully."

"Could I? It would be fun! Still, I think we can make more money and have more fun writing plays."

She seemed always to be harping on their future together!

The next day was full of surprises for them both. They were entirely ignorant of conditions in and about the theatre. The big, dark house, with its seats all swathed in linen covers, the empty, barn-like stage, with chairs set about to indicate properties; the stage hands coming and going, the stage manager shouting directions — it was all new to them. The members of the company were as businesslike as bank clerks. No hint of illusion, no scrap of romance!

"Mercy! it's like a ghost house," said Bambi.

A deal table was set at one side, down stage, for the Jocelyns, with two scripts of the play. They sat down like frightened school children, bewildered as to what would be expected of them.

The actors sat in a row of chairs at one side. The stage manager made some explanations and remarks about rehearsals, and then the first act was called. It was slow and tedious work. Over and over again the scenes were tried. Some of the actors

fumbled their lines as if they had never read English before. Now and then the manager appealed to the authors for the reading of a line, or an intonation, and Bambi always answered. At the end of one scene the man who was to play the young musician came to them.

"I've been thinking over my part, Mrs. Jocelyn, and I think that if you could write in a scene right here, in act first, to let me explain to the old fiddler my reason for being in this situation —— "

"Oh, no, you mustn't explain. The whole point of the first act is that you explain nothing."

"Yes, but it would play better," he began, in the patronizing tone always used to newcomers in the theatre.

"I can't help that. I cannot spoil the truth of a whole character, even if it does play better," said Bambi, smiling sweetly.

The actor took it up with the stage manager after rehearsal, and was referred to the authors.

"These new playwrights always have to learn at our expense," he said, importantly.

"Can't be helped. We have to use playwrights, however irritating they are," remarked the stage manager.

Day after day they assembled at the same hour and slowly built up the structure of the play. Many nights Jarvis and Bambi worked on new scenes, or the rearrangement of the old ones. The first act was twisted about many times before it "played" to the stage manager's satisfaction. New lines had to be introduced, new business worked out every day. It was hard work for everybody except Bambi, and she declared it was fun. No matter how trying the rehearsals, nor how hard she had to work, she enjoyed every minute of it. They soon discovered that Jarvis had no talent for rehearsing. In fact, the mechanics of the thing bored him. When a new scene was demanded quickly, his mind refused to work. It was Bambi's quick wits that saved the day. After the first few days she was the only one to be consulted and appealed to by everybody.

"I can't see that you need me at all in this business. I'm no good at it."

"Yes, you are, too. You saw where that new scene in the third act belonged at once."

"Yes, after you wrote the scene."

"But this is why we need each other. I didn't see where the scene belonged at all. If we both could do the same thing, we wouldn't need to collab-

orate. Thank heaven, we don't have the author underfoot interfering all the time."

"I don't believe she would interfere."

"Heard anything from her, lately?"

"No, she is waiting for the production, I suppose."

"And then the deluge! I may lose you to that story-writing female yet!" she teased him.

"Don't!" he protested, quickly.

"I won't," she retorted, meaningly.

In late March the date of the production was set. It gave Bambi unbelievable pleasure to read the announcements on the billboards, and to stand in front of the three-sheets in the foyer of the theatre.

She wrote Ardelia full directions in regard to packing the Professor's dress clothes; she told her the train they were to take; she worked out every detail, so that nothing might be left to the sievelike memories of the principals on this foreign journey.

She ordered a new frock for herself, and succeeded in getting Jarvis measured for new dress clothes. Then she threw herself, heart and soul, into the last few days of work at the theatre, helping to polish and strengthen the play. The night of dress rehearsal came, and with it a new development for her consideration and management.

XXVII

DRESS rehearsal was called at midnight, as two of the principals were playing in other theatres. There was an air of suspense and confusion on the stage, where the new sets were being put on, which threw Jarvis into a cold sweat of terror. It only added one degree to Bambi's mounting excitement. She and Jarvis made their way to the front of the house, where Mr. Frohman, the leader of the orchestra, and a few other people interested in the production were assembled.

"I never realized before how many people, how much work and money and brain go into the production of the simplest comedy for one night's amusement," she said to Mr. Frohman.

"And yet managers are always blamed because they don't take more chances on new playwrights," he smiled.

"Jarvis looks as if he were walking to the guillotine, doesn't he?"

"It is a strain, isn't it, Jocelyn? You get used to it after a few first-nights."

Jarvis nodded, wetting his dry lips with a nervous tongue.

The curtain went down and came up. The first act began. Bambi scarcely breathed. Jarvis could be heard all over the house. The first part of the act hitched along and had to be repeated; the stage manager came out and scolded, while Mr. Frohman called directions from the front. Bambi turned to Jarvis.

"It's going to be a failure," she said.

"Oh, don't say that!" he fairly groaned.

"Don't be discouraged!" said Mr. Frohman, noting their despairing looks. "Dress rehearsals are usually the limit."

"But it can't go like this, and succeed," Bambi wailed.

"Don't you worry. It won't go like this."

The night wore on, miserably, for the authors. Everything had to be done over — lines were forgotten — everybody was in a nervous stew.

"The awful part of it is that we've done all we can do," moaned Bambi. "If they ruin it, we can't prevent them."

"We'll make them rehearse all day to-morrow," said Jarvis, fiercely. "They were better than this two weeks ago."

The end of the agony finally came. The stage manager assembled the weary company and gave them a few select and sarcastic remarks as to their single and collective failure. Mr. Frohman added a few words, and ordered them all to dismiss the play from their minds until the morrow night. Bambi tried to say a word of encouragement and thanks to them, but in the midst of it she broke down and wept.

"Take her home and keep her in bed to-morrow, Jocelyn," Mr. Frohman said.

Jarvis hurried her into a cab, and she sobbed softly all the way home. He made no effort to touch her or comfort her; he was in torment himself. At the club he ordered eggnog and sandwiches sent to her room, whither he followed her, helpless to cope with her tears.

She threw her things off and bathed her eyes, while he set out the table for the food. When the boy appeared with it, Jarvis led her to her chair and served her. She smiled mistily at him.

" It's nerves and excitement and overwork," she explained. He nodded.

"If it failed now, it would be too awful," he said.

"Don't say that word; don't even think it!" she cried.

"You mustn't care so much," he begged her.

"Don't you care?"

"Of course, more than you know. But I am prepared for failure, if it comes."

"I can't be prepared for it. It cannot happen!" she sobbed.

He stood looking down at her helplessly.

"What can I do for you? What is it you want?" he demanded gently.

"I want to be rocked," she sobbed.

"To be —— "

She pushed him into a big chair, and climbed into his arms.

"Rocked," she finished.

He held her a minute closely, then he rose and set her down.

"I can't do it," he began. "I have something to tell you that must be said —— "

"Not to-night, Jarvis, I'm too tired."

"Yes, to-night, before another hour passes. Sit down there, please."

She obeyed, curiously.

"Do you remember Christmas Eve, when I came home?"

"Yes."

"Did you notice anything different about me?"

"How, different?"

"Did it occur to you that I cared about you, for the first time?"

"I — I — suspicioned it a little."

"Then you deliberately ignored it because you did not want my love?"

"I — I — didn't mean to ignore it."

"But you did."

"I wasn't sure; you never spoke of it, never said you cared. After that first night I thought I must have been mistaken."

"But you were glad to be mistaken?"

"No. I was sorry," she said, softly.

"What?" sharply.

"I wanted your love, Jarvis."

"You can't mean that."

"But I do!"

"But, Strong — you love Strong —— "

She rose quickly, her face flushed.

"I love Richard Strong as my friend, and in no other way."

"Certainly he loves you."

"He has never told me so."

"You let me believe you cared for him; you tortured me with your show of preference for him."

"You imagined that, Jarvis. It is not true!"

"It is true!" he cried, passionately. "I came to you, eager for your love, wanting you as I had never wanted anything. You flaunted this man in my face, you shut me out, you drove me back on myself —— "

"Well?"

"What did you expect me to do? Endure forever in silence?"

"What did you do? Or what do you mean to do?"

"I have come to care for a woman who understands me —— "

"A woman, Jarvis?"

"The woman who wrote 'Francesca.' I cared first because she had put into her heroine so many things that were like you."

"Well?" she said again.

"She has come to care for me. I wanted to tell you so long ago, when we first knew, but she begged me not to until after the play was tried out. But I can't stand it another minute. There must be

truth between us, Bambi. I want you to read her letters. I want you to try to understand how this has crept into my heart."

"You wish to be free — to go to her?"

"There is no happiness for us, is there?"

"I'm too tired to think it out now, Jarvis. You must go away and let me get myself together."

She looked like a pitiful little wraith, and his heart ached for her.

"I'm sorry I had to add to your hard day, but I had to say this to-night."

"It's all right. I must ask you not to speak to me of it again until after to-morrow night. I need all my strength for that ordeal. After that, we must turn our attention to this new problem, and work it out together, somehow."

"Thank you. I'm sorry I've been such a disappointment to you, my dear," he added.

"Good-night. Take the letters — I could not bear to read them."

With an agonized look he took them and left her.

"Dear Lord, I'm through with plots! I'm sick unto death of the secret," she sighed, as she climbed into bed.

XXVIII

BAMBI kept to her room next day until it was time to meet the train on which Ardelia and the Professor were to arrive. It was due at four o'clock. She went to Jarvis's door, but he was not in his room. She had heard nothing of him since his confession of the night before.

Her telephone bell startled her, and she took up the receiver to hear Jarvis's voice.

"Bambi?"

"Yes."

"How are you?"

"All right."

"Don't you want me to meet the Professor and Ardelia? There's no need of your going up to Grand Central."

"I'd rather go thank you, Jarvis. Where are you?"

"At the theatre."

"Anything the matter?"

"Oh, no. I came to talk to the stage manager.

He says everything will be all right to-night. Are you resting?"

"Yes. I've had a quiet day, sitting on my nervous system. Where have you been?"

"Walking the streets."

"Come home and take some rest. I'll meet the train. Thank you just as much for thinking of it."

"I'll be at the information booth at five minutes to four."

"All right."

She hung up the phone with a dazed face. The idea of Jarvis taking care of her, inquiring after her health, and trying to spare her!

"Every blessed thing is topsy-turvy," she exclaimed aloud.

At four o'clock she walked up to the booth, and there he stood, anxiously scanning the faces that passed.

"Hello!" she said cheerfully.

He looked grateful and smiled.

"You look as if you had had a spell of sickness, you're so white," he said.

"I'm all right, but you look like a nervous pros. case. Aren't we pitiful objects for eminently successful playwrights?"

"I suppose one gets used to this strain in time," he said, taking her arm to help her through the crowd.

No sooner had the train come to a stop than they saw Ardelia's huge frame descend from the car, holding a dress-suit case in each hand. After her came the Professor, looking very small and shrunken. Ardelia saw them afar, and waved the heavy suit-case in the air like a banner as she hurried toward them.

"Howdy, Miss Bambi? Howdy, Mistah Jarvis? Heah we is."

"Bless your old hearts!" said Bambi, hugging them both.

"How are you, children?" the Professor inquired.

"We're fine! Did you have a comfortable time on the trip? Why did you sit in the day coach, father?"

"De Perfessor, he won't set in de' chaih cah, cause'n dey won't let me in dere, an' he's 'fraid he fergit to git off less'n he was 'longside ob me."

"But the train stops here — it doesn't go any farther. My! Ardelia, you do look stylish!"

"Yas'm. Wait until yo' see my noo black silk. I'se got me a tight skirt, an' a Dutch neck — Lawzee, honey, but dis ole niggah's gittin' mighty frisky."

She and Jarvis had an argument about the bags. She insisted upon carrying them herself, and indignantly refused the help of the coloured porter.

"Go way f'um heah, boy. Yo' reckon I gwine trust yo' all wid ma' noo silk dress an de Perfessor's dress suit? No, sah!"

She kept them laughing all the way to the club with her tales of their difficulties and excitements in getting off. Her exclamations on everything she saw were convulsing. When they arrived at the club, and she discovered that she was to have the little room next to Bambi's, her satisfaction was complete.

Bambi ordered the entire family to repose on its respective backs for an hour before they dressed for dinner. So they parted to obey orders. For that hour Bambi held herself firmly upon her bed, completing her plans. They had agreed, she and Jarvis, that if there should be a call for the author, they would take it together, and Jarvis would speak. She was not sure just how she was to make the revelation to him of her dual personality. She decided to leave it to chance.

Never in her life had she been so excited. The double responsibility as author and playwright shrank to second place in comparison with the fact

that this night she was to tell Jarvis of her love for him — hear him speak his love for her.

Before the hour of enforced quiet was over she could hear Ardelia tiptoeing about her room. Presently her head was cautiously inserted through the door. When she saw a hand waved at her, she bounced in.

"Laws, honey, I'se so excited, I cain't hol' my eyes shet. I got de Perfessor's dress suit cloes all laid out smooth, wif de buttons in de shirt, an' de white tie ready. Now, yo' let me help yo' all git dressed befo' I begin to wrassle wid dat tight skirt ob mine."

"All right, sit down and hold your hands till I jump into my bath."

While Bambi bathed, Ardelia shouted all the gossip of home through the bathroom door. Upon Bambi's reappearance, she insisted upon dressing her like a child. She put on her silk stockings and slippers, getting herself down and up with many a grunt. She constituted herself a critical judge in the hair-dressing process, and fussed about every pin.

"Why ain't yo' all had one ob dese heah hair-fixers do yo' haid?"

"And make me look like a hair-shop model? Not much!"

"Well, yo' done purty good."

"Wait till I curl it," said Bambi, throwing up the window and popping her head out into the night air.

"Fo' de Lawd's sake, yo' curl yo' haih in Noo Yawk jes' lak yo' do at home."

"Why not? This cold, damp air is just the thing. Now look at me," she boasted, shaking her head so that the soft, curly rings fluttered like little bells about her face.

"Yo'll do," said Ardelia.

Bambi disappeared into the closet, and presently she popped out her head.

"Ardelia, prepare to die of joy. When you have seen my new dress, life has nothing more to offer you."

"I ain' gwine to die till after dis show."

Out of the closet Bambi danced, her arms full of sunset clouds apparently She held it up, and Ardelia's eyes bulged.

"Yo' don' call dat a dress?"

"Put it on me, and you'll call it a poem."

"Dey ain't nuthin' to it," she protested, as she slipped it over Bambi's head.

It was certainly a diaphanous thing of many layers of chiffon, graduating in colour from flame to palest apricot pink. It hung straight and simple on

Bambi's lithe figure, bringing out all the colour, the dash, the firelike quality in the girl's personality. The flush in her cheeks, the glow in her eyes, even the little curls, were like twisted tongues of flame. She whirled for Ardelia's inspection.

"I know dat ain't no decent dress, but yo' sho' is beautiful as Pottypar's wife."

"Who's she?"

"She's in the Bible!"

Bambi laughed.

"I look like the 'fire of spring,'" she nodded to her reflection. "Of course I'm beautiful! This is the biggest, happiest night of my life!"

A boy came for the Professor's clothes, and a little later that distracted gentleman presented himself to have his tie arranged, and to be looked over generally in case of omissions.

"My dear!" he exclaimed at sight of his daughter. "*Aren't* I wonderful?"

He put his hand under her chin and tipped her face to him.

"There is something about you to-night — elemental is the word — fire, water, and air."

She hugged him.

"Oh, but you've got a surprise coming to you this

night. You are about to discover other unsuspected elements in your offspring."

"My dear, I'm so excited now I'm counting backward. Don't explode anything on me or I'll lose control."

"The secret is coming out to-night."

"Is it painful?"

"No, it's heavenly!"

Jarvis rapped.

"May I come in?'

"Yes."

He stood on the threshold a moment, a truly magnificent figure in his evening clothes.

"Jarvis!" breathed Bambi.

"Bambi!" exclaimed Jarvis, and they stood a-gaze. She recovered first.

"Do you like me?" she coquetted.

He walked about her slowly, considering her from all sides.

"Ariel!" he said at last.

"Oh, thank you, Apollo," she laughed, to cover the lump in her throat at his awed admiration.

They sent Ardelia's supper up to her, and the rest of them made an attempt at dining, but nobody could eat a thing. Bambi talked incessantly from excite-

ment, and all eyes in the dining-room were focussed upon her.

Ardelia was in a tremor of pride when they went upstairs again. She shone like ebony, and grinned like a Hindoo idol. They admired her, to her heart's content, and she descended to the cab in a state of sinful pride.

Although they were early, the motors were already unloading before the theatre. They were to sit in the stage box, and as soon as the rest of them were seated Bambi went back on the stage to say good-evening to the company. The first-night excitement prevailed back there. Every member of the company was dressed and made up a good half hour too soon. They all assured the perturbed author that she need have no fears, everything would go off in fine shape. Somewhat relieved, she started to go out front, when she ran into Mr. Frohman.

"Good-evening. If you are as well as you look, you're all right," he smiled at her.

"I feel like a loaded mine about to blow to pieces," she answered.

"Hold on for a couple of hours more. Does Jarvis know yet?"

"Not yet."

He laughed and went on. Bambi returned to the box, where she sat far back in the corner. The house was filling fast now. More than a little interest was evinced in the strange box party of big Jarvis, the Professor, and Ardelia. Richard Strong nodded and smiled from a nearby seat.

"We should have come in late, just as the curtain rose," whispered Bambi. "We must not be so green again."

"Why so, daughter?"

"Then we wouldn't be stared at."

"Are we stared at? By whom?"

The overture interrupted her reply. The seats were full now as high as the eye could reach the balconies. Bambi scanned the faces eagerly. Would they like the play? If they only knew what it meant to Jarvis and to her to have them like it!

The curtain rose. For two full moments she could not breathe. The act started off briskly, and little by little her tension relaxed. She laid her hand on Jarvis's knee and it was stiff with nervous concentration. The first genuine laugh came to both of them like manna from heaven.

"It's all right," Bambi whispered to Jarvis. He nodded, his eyes glued to the stage.

Of all kinds of creative work, dramatic writing can be the most poignant or the most satisfactory. It is the keenest pleasure to see characters whom you have invented given life and personality if the actors are clever. The Jocelyns had the aid of practically a perfect cast. The sense of power that comes with the laughter or the tears of an audience aroused by your thoughts is a very real experience. Bambi "ate up her sensations," as Strong had said. As the curtain descended after the first act the applause was instantaneous and long.

"They like it," Bambi said with a sigh.

"Yes, thank God!" from Jarvis.

"You told me not to take this seriously, Jarvis," she reminded him.

"Does anybody know who wrote this book?" the Professor inquired.

"Not yet. We are to know to-night. I wonder where she is?" Jarvis added to Bambi.

"I've thought that fat old one in the opposite box," she said wickedly. "Why did you ask, father?"

"It is a diverting idea. The girl is like you, or maybe it is the similarity of the names that suggests it."

"What do you think about the play, Ardelia?"

"Law, honey, 'tain't no play-actin' to me. It's jes' lak' bein' home wid yo' an' de' Perfessor and Marse Jarvis. Dose folkses is jes' lak yo' all."

Bambi laughed outright. Ardelia was the only one who guessed.

"I trust you do not compare me to that impractical old fiddling man," the Professor protested to Ardelia.

"Sh! Here's the curtain!" warned Bambi.

The second act went like a breeze. Laughter and applause punctuated its progress. The house was warming up. Bambi slipped her hand into Jarvis's, and he held it so tight that she could feel his heart beat through his palm. There was no doubt about it at the end of the second act. It was going. The company took repeated curtain calls, smiling at the Jocelyns.

"I'm grinning so I shall never get my face straight again," Bambi said to Richard, who came to the box to congratulate them.

"Looks like a go," he said, cordially.

Even Jarvis unbent to him, and insisted upon his sitting with them for the third act. Bambi added a smiling second. She had explained to Richard, in advance, why she did not invite him to share the box.

"I am having a most unexpectedly good time," the Professor admitted to them all.

Jarvis's state of mind was painful as the last act began. In the next thirty minutes he was to meet the woman he thought he loved. Since his confession to Bambi the night before, a doubt had raised its head to stare at him as to the real depth of his feeling for his unknown inamorata. Had he really been moved by love, or was it only a need of sympathy for his hurt pride that had driven him to her? Bambi's strange behaviour, her admission that she did not love Strong, most of all those moments when she lay in his arms — they had upset all his convictions and emotions. He paid no attention to the act at all, torn as he was as to what the night would bring him.

He was aroused by storms of applause. The curtain went up again, and again; the company bowed solo and in a group. Then calls of "Author! Author!" were heard all over the house. Bambi clutched Jarvis's sleeve and drew him back of the box.

"Go on! You've got to go out and bow. You do it alone, Jarvis ——"

In answer he took her arm and propelled her in front of him, back on the stage.

"Here they are! give them full stage!" said the

stage manager, ringing up the curtain. "Now, go ahead, right out there!"

He opened a door in the set and Jarvis and Bambi went on. There was a hush for a second, then a big round of applause. Bambi laughed and waved her hand. There was a hush of expectancy.

"Now, Jarvis, go on!" she prompted him.

Jarvis, cold as death, began to speak. He thanked everybody in the prescribed way, beginning with the audience, ending with the company. He said he was happy that they liked the play, but that he was making the speech under false pretences. All the credit for the success must go to two women, his wife and collaborator —— Here he turned to include Bambi, but to his astonishment she was gone. The audience laughed at his discomfiture, but he turned it off wittily. The other woman, the one to whom most of the credit was due, was the author of the book. She had so far hidden behind an anonymity, but he believed she was in the house to-night, and it was to her that their congratulations should be offered. Cries of "Author! Author of the book!" with much clapping of hands. Jarvis stood there, scarcely breathing, cold sweat on his brow, waiting for her to come. The applause became a clamour. The door

opened and Bambi floated in. She did not see the audience, her eyes were fixed on Jarvis's face, and the strange expression she saw there. She came to him, put her hand in his, and smiled. He was so obviously nonplussed that the people grasped a new situation and were suddenly still. Bambi smiled at him and spoke:

"Dear People: If you have had as much fun tonight as I have, we owe each other nothing! And the most fun of all is the astonishment of Mr. Jarvis Jocelyn, who discovers himself to be a bigamist. He's married to the co-dramatist and the author, and he never knew it! That I wrote the book has been a secret until this minute. If you hadn't liked the play, I never *would* have admitted that I wrote it. You're the very nicest first-nighters I ever met, and we are both most grateful to you, the bigamist and I."

There was wild applause, flowers were tossed from the boxes, calls of "Brava!" greeted the little bowing figure clinging tightly to the big man's hand. They finally made their escape to the wings, and Bambi turned to Jarvis for what was to her the real climax of the evening.

He looked at her so strangely that she laid her hand on his arm.

"You aren't glad?" she questioned, anxiously.

Some members of the company surrounded them with congratulations, and when they were free they had to hurry out to rescue the rest of the family.

"What did you think of the secret, Daddy?"

"My child, I am past all thought. I wish to be taken home, put to bed, and allowed to recover slowly. I have had a shock of surprise that would kill a less vigorous man."

"But you liked it? You were glad I did it?"

"I am so proud of you that I am imbecile. Let us go home."

Richard shook both her hands in silent congratulation.

"Where is Jarvis?" asked her father.

A search failed to find him. Richard made a trip back on the stage, but he was not there.

"We won't wait, if you will put us into our cab," Bambi said to him.

He saw them all off, promising to send Jarvis along if he saw him.

"What do you suppose became of him?" demanded the Professor.

But Bambi did not answer. All the triumph of the evening counted for nothing to her now. Jarvis had

been hurt or angered at her revelation. He had deliberately gone off and left her, regardless of appearances. She spent the night in anxious listening for his return, but morning found his rooms vacant, his bed untouched. Bambi's heart misgave her.

XXIX

JARVIS was never sure what happened to him after he came off the stage with Bambi. Something had exploded in his brain, and his only thought was to get away, away from all the noisy, chattering, hand-shaking people, to some quiet place, where he could think.

On the way back to the box in Bambi's train, he had been separated from her a minute, long enough to spy the stage door, to slip out and away. He headed uptown without design, walking, walking, at a furious pace. Bambi, herself, was the Lady of Mystery to whom he had offered his devotions. The thing which hurt him was that she had tricked him into declaring himself, probably laughed at his ardour. It made him rage to think of it. What had been her object? He could not decipher her riddle at all. If she wanted his love, she might have had it for the taking, without all this play-acting nonsense. There was no use in his ever expecting to understand

her or her motives. He might as well give it up and be done with it.

He built up the whole story, bit by bit. Her mysterious trips to town were in regard to the book, of course. The "butter-'n-eggs" money came from royalties. Strong had published the story in his magazine: hence their intimacy. His thought attacked this idea furiously, then he remembered Bambi's words, "I love Richard Strong as my good friend, and in no other way."

There was no doubting the sincerity of that declaration. Besides, Bambi never lied. She had not deceived him, then, with any deliberate plan to alienate his affections so that she could be free to go to Strong. No light along that line of questioning.

He went on, feeling his way, step by step, to the point of the dramatization of the book. Here he paused long. Surely he had not been her dupe here. He was Frohman's choice as dramatist. But was he? She and Frohman had come to some understanding, because she had gone to see him the day the play was delivered. No, that could not be, for he found her at home when he returned. He could not find a piece to fit into the puzzle at this point. He went over their joint work on the book — her book. He

understood, now, how she was so sure of every move, why she knew her characters so well. What a blind fool he had been not to see that Francesca was herself! How she had played with him about that, too. How she drew him out about the other characters. He stopped in his tracks as the last blow fell. The musician was intended for a study of him — that hazy, impossible dreamer, with his half-baked, egotistical theories of his own divine importance. Why, in God's name, had she married him if that was her opinion of him? His brain beat it over and over, to the click of his heels on the pavement.

The fiddler was the Professor, of course. Any one but a blind man would have seen it. So she had made mock of them, the two men nearest to her, for all the world to laugh at! That she wanted to punish him for not coming up to her expectations, that he could understand, but why had she betrayed the Professor whom she loved?

He reviewed the period of rehearsals — her sure touch revealed again. She knew every move. She even saw herself so clearly that she could correct the actress in a false move. She had held herself up for public inspection, too. He had to admit that. It seemed so shameless to him, so lacking in reserve.

He urged his mind on to the night now passing, the night he had looked forward to, for so many months, as the first white stone along the road to success. Well, it had been a success, but none of his. Bambi's — all Bambi's. She had conceived the book, worked out the play, and rehearsed it, to a triumphant issue. It was all hers! The only part he could claim was that Frohman had sent for him. But had he? Was it possible he had only humoured Bambi in her desire to give him a chance? He would find out the truth about that, and if it were so, he could never forgive her.

He saw her coming toward him in reply to the calls for "Author!" her eyes fixed on him, shining and expectant! What had she wanted him to do? Was it possible she expected him to be pleased?

Broad daylight found him far up toward the Bronx, weary, footsore, and hungry. When he came to himself he realized that he must send some word to the club of his whereabouts. He wrote a message to Bambi:

"I shall not come back to-day. I cannot. You have hurt me very deeply.

"JARVIS."

He put a special delivery stamp on it and mailed it. He found some breakfast, and went into the Bronx Park, where he sat down under the bare trees to face himself.

In the meantime Bambi, after a sleepless night, was up betimes. At breakfast she protested that she was not at all worried. Jarvis had no doubt decided to celebrate the success in the usual masculine way. He would come home later, with a headache.

"But Jarvis isn't a drinking man, is he?" the Professor inquired.

"No, but it's the way men always celebrate, isn't it?"

The Professor wanted the whole story of the writing of the book, the prize winning, Mr. Frohman's order, and all, so, after breakfast, she made a clean breast of it, and they laughed over it for a couple of hours. Then Jarvis's message came. Her face quivered as she read it.

"What is it, dear? Is it Jarvis?"

She nodded, the slow tears falling.

"He isn't hurt?"

"Not physically hurt, but I've hurt his feelings. Oh, Daddy, I've made such a mess of it. I wanted Jarvis to be dazzled by my success, because he thinks

I'm a helpless sort of thing, and now he only hates me for it."

She broke down and wept bitterly. The Professor, distressed and helpless, took her into his arms and petted her.

"There, there, Baby, it will work out all right. Just let us go home, where we're used to things, and everything will look different."

"Yes, that's it, we'll all go home," sobbed Bambi, wiping her eyes.

"Where is Jarvis?"

"I don't know. But I can leave word for him here that we've gone back home."

"Then we can get the two o'clock train. Nothing but misery comes to people in these cities."

By dint of much hurry they caught the train, Ardelia protesting up to the moment when the train started that they couldn't possibly make it. Bambi sat, chin on hand, all the way, a sad, pale-faced figure. No one could suspect, to see her now, that she had been the brilliant flame-thing of the night before. Once the Professor patted her hand and she tried to smile at him, but it wasn't much of a success.

When they entered the house, and Ardelia bustled

about to get them some tea, Bambi sat dejectedly, with all her things on, among the travelling-bags.

"Be of good courage, little daughter," her father said.

"Oh, Father Professor, are the fruits of success always so bitter — so bitter?" she cried to him.

XXX

THE first week of the play went by, and it was an assured success. The royalty for the first seven days was a surprise, which would have thrown Bambi into raptures under ordinary circumstances. But the Bambi of these days and rapture were no longer playmates.

There had been no word from Jarvis since that time of the first brief message. Bambi went about the house a thin, white-faced, little ghost, with never a song or a smile.

"Fo' Gawd, Perfessor, it makes me cry to look at Miss Bambi, an' I don' dare ask her what's de mattah."

"I think we must just let her alone, Ardelia. She'll work this thing out for herself." But he, too, was alarmed at the change in her.

The more she thought of how she had thrown away Jarvis's love, the more she lacerated herself with reproaches. Her fatal love of play-acting had brought her sorrow this time. How could she have done it?

Why didn't she see that Jarvis would never understand what made her do it, that he would resent it.

Some days she was in a fury at him for not understanding her. Other days she wanted him so that she could scarcely refrain from taking a train to New York and looking for him. In her sane moments she knew that the only thing she could do now was to wait.

Richard Strong came down to dine and spend the night, and one thing he said added to her misery.

"Jarvis stayed in town, didn't he?" he remarked.

"Yes."

"Looking after things there, I suppose? I passed him on the street yesterday, but he didn't see me."

"You passed him yesterday?" breathlessly.

"Yes. The opening and the strain of the rehearsal knocked him out, didn't it? He looked as gaunt as a monk."

"Jarvis takes things very seriously."

"By the way, how did he take your joke?"

She looked directly at him and answered frankly:

"He didn't think it was funny at all."

"Oh, that's a pity."

"I'm through with jokes, Richard, through with them for all time," she said, her lips quivering.

"Oh, no — try one on me, I'd like it," he laughed to cover her emotion, and changed the subject quickly.

When he returned to town he called up the Frohman offices, asking for Jarvis's address. He was still at the National Arts Club, they assured him. So that evening he presented himself there unannounced. He found Jarvis alone in the reading-room, a book open before sightless eyes. He rose to greet Strong, with evident reluctance.

"I'm glad to find you, Jocelyn. I have something particular to say to you.'

"So? Sit down, won't you?"

"I've just come back from Sunnyside, where I spent the night. I wanted to settle the details of your wife's next serial."

"Yes."

"Have you seen her since the opening night?"

"No."

"I think she is either very ill, or very unhappy, possibly both. She seems such a frail little thing that one dreads any extra demands on her. I knew you stayed on to look after the business here, of course. . . . You know the dear, blind, old Professor. Naturally you are the person to look

after her, and I thought it would be just like her not to say a word to you about it all, so here I am, playing tame cat, carrying tales. Go down to-night, Jocelyn, and take that girl away somewhere."

"They think she's ill?" Jarvis repeated.

"She looks it to me. If she were my wife, I'd be alarmed."

He rose as he finished, and Jarvis rose, too. They looked each other in the eyes.

"Thank you!" said Jarvis.

He suddenly realized, without words of any kind, that this man suffered as he did, because he, too, loved Bambi. He was big enough to come to her husband with news of her need. By a common impulse their hands met in a warm handclasp.

"She needs you, Jocelyn," Strong said.

"You're a good friend, Strong," Jarvis answered.

When he had gone, Jarvis hurried to his room and began to pack his bag. His heart beat like a trip-hammer with excitement. He was going to Bambi! She needed him. He had endured a week of the third degree, practised upon himself. He had peered into every nook and corner of his own soul. He knew himself for a blind, selfish egotist. He was ready now to fling his winter garments of repentance

into the fires of spring. He understood himself, though Bambi baffled him more than ever. Never mind. She needed him. Strong said so — and he was going to her.

He was at the station an hour before the train left, pacing up and down the platform like an angry lion. Aboard the sleeper, and on the way, he tossed and turned in his berth in wakefulness. At dawn he was up and dressed, to sit in a fever of impatience while the landscape slowly slid by the car window.

At Sunnyside he hurried along the deserted street, where only the milkman wound his weary way in the early morning. There was a hint of spring in the air, fresh and exhilarating, with a faint earth smell.

The house lay, with closed blinds, still asleep. He let himself in with his latch-key, dropped his bag, hat, and coat in the hall, and rushed upstairs to Bambi's rooms. No hesitation now. He would storm the citadel in truth. He opened her bedroom door softly and peered in. It was unknown country to him. The bed was empty. He entered and walked swiftly to the door beyond, where he heard a faint crackling, as of a fire burning. At the door he paused.

She was crouched before a fire, cross-legged, her face cupped on her hands In her pink robe and cap

she looked more like a child than ever. She half turned her head, as if feeling his presence, so he saw how pale she was, how black the circles round her eyes.

"My little love!" he cried to her. "My little love!"

She sprang to her feet, facing him; her hands went swiftly to her heart, as if a spasm shook her. As Jarvis came toward her, a great light in his face, she put her hands out to fend him off.

"I want you to know that I realize just how silly and cheap and theatrical I've been. I didn't mean to hurt you," she began in a monotone, as if it tired her too much to speak. He tried to stop her, but she shook her head.

"I have to say it all now. I cared so much when you came home that time, and after the first night I thought you didn't care for me."

"My best beloved, let me ——"

"No, no — please. I was piqued and angry and I thought I could punish you by pretending to be the other woman you thought you were writing to. I wanted to make you care for her, and then ——"

"It was you I cared for — you, you, you!"

"I thought that, when you knew I was both of us, you'd be so glad ——" She broke off into a sob.

"I am, dearest, I am."

"I never meant to hurt you. This week has nearly killed me."

He took her into his arms, and sat in the big chair, holding her close, while she clung to him and sobbed out her heart. He kissed her hair, her wet eyes, and her lips, saying over and over, "Oh, littlest, I love you so, I love you so!" When the sobs ceased, he lifted her face to his.

"I want to see the shine in your eyes, dearest, and then I want you to listen to me."

She drew his head down to her and kissed him.

"The shine will come back now, beloved. Oh, Big" — she said with a sigh — "my old Jarvis."

"No, your new Jarvis, little wife. The old, crazy Jarvis will be more to your liking. I may not understand you very well yet, but I know my need of you my pride in you ——"

"And my need of you?"

"And your need of me. We're in step, now, honey girl — and we'll march along together without any more misunderstandings, won't we?"

"Oh, we will, if you'll take short steps, so I can keep up."

"I'm the one to do the running now, Miss Mite.

A famous novelist and a successful playwright!" he laughed, pinching her cheek.

"None of it counts. The only title that means anything to me is Mrs. Jarvis Jocelyn."

His comment on that was inaudible.

"Would you mind telling me just why you married me?"

"Because I was a seeress, and foresaw this day."

More comment, inaudible. The door opened, cautiously, the Professor tiptoed in, followed by Ardelia, with a tray. At the sight of the two before him, engrossed in the inaudible comments, he stepped back into Ardelia and rattled the contents of the tray. Jarvis looked up and caught his astonished expression. He rose with Bambi in his arms.

"Good-morning, Father. I'm home," he said.

"Thank de good Lawd!" from Ardelia.

"It's Jarvis," said Bambi, fatuously, patting his cheek.

"I suspected that it was when I saw him," the Professor admitted. "I'm glad that you're back, and I hope you'll stay. This child needs a firmer hand than mine."

"You're speaking of a woman with a well-advanced career, Herr Professor Parkhurst!'

"Ardelia, we are not needed. She is well. A dose of Jarvis Jocelyn was the correct prescription."

"Well, thank Gawd fo' some sho' nuff lovin' at las' " said Ardelia, as she backed out behind the Professor, and closed the door.

THE END

THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.